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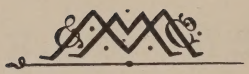

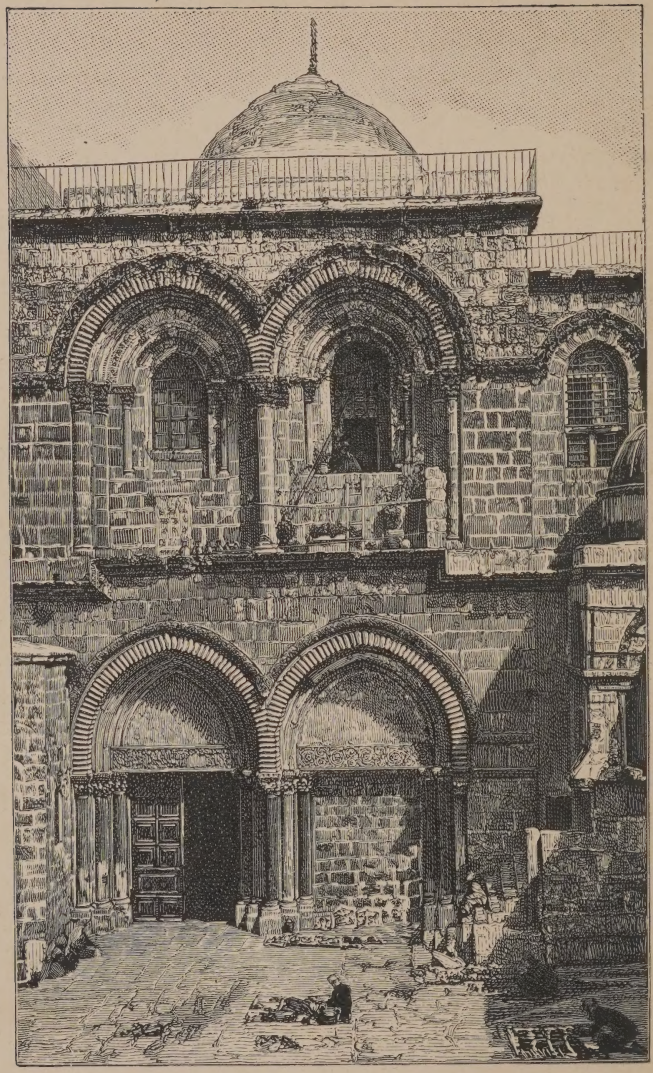

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. *Frontispiece.*

JERUSALEM

THE HOLY CITY

ITS HISTORY AND HOPE

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF "MAKERS OF FLORENCE," "MAKERS OF VENICE," ETC.

"Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever"

WITH WOOD ENGRAVINGS FROM DRAWINGS BY HAMILTON AIDÉ
AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY F. M. GOOD

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TO MY

DEAR CHILDREN AND COMPANIONS

J. R. O., M. O. W.

AND THEIR ELDER BROTHER

C. F. O.

WHO HAS SINCE DEPARTED FROM US TO THE JERUSALEM THAT IS ABOVE

NOTE.

THE writer scarcely needs to say that this book is no record of Eastern travel: her experiences in the Holy Land having no special importance, save as making more vivid to herself the scenes to which the following history is devoted. It may be well, however, to say that these holy places may be visited with no exertion that is beyond the powers of a person in ordinary health, though neither young nor adventurous. Nothing can exceed the care and kindness of the attendants who escort the not-robust travellers through a region where convenience and comfort are by no means the rule of life. And she has a special remembrance to make of the kindness of the Greek ecclesiastical authorities in Jerusalem, and of the constant attention of the excellent dragoman, David Jamal, who was the Providence of her little party.

INTRODUCTION.

THE story of Jerusalem is one of the most wonderful in the world, besides being of unparalleled importance to the human race. Insignificant in power even at its greatest, it has been, through all the ages of secular history, no better than a tributary and dependent of great empires which have risen and fallen and passed away, yet left this little city on its hills, always the most interesting spot on earth, the indestructible, the source of the mightiest influence, the foundation of the greatest systems of earthly law and thought. Before the literature of Greece had been thought of, song and story and the noblest inspirations of philosophy and poetry had come to being upon the little crests of Zion and Moriah: the Temple had been built there which has never faded, though destroyed, burned, broken down a dozen times, swept far from sight and knowledge, from the memory and imagination of men: and the records of humanity had begun to be put forth in full splendour of character and impulse and feeling, in chronicles which are as fresh and living now as when they were transcripts of the life of three thousand years ago. We go no farther than the heroic age of Hebrew genius when we name this date: beyond, in the mist of the ages, before even ancient Egypt had begun to engrave her rigid annals upon stone, the record goes back, not in hieroglyphics, but in his-

tories of living men. A learned sect studies and scrutinises with painful confusion of images what a great Rameses may or may not have done: but the child of to-day wants no better entertainment than that story of Joseph and his brethren which is told in every language and never fails to touch the simple heart. Before Homer had begun his primitive minstrel strain to celebrate the fights and wiles of the chiefs and kings, Isaiah had risen to the highest heights of poetry, had opened the great dim gates of Hades, and had revealed, on the other hand, a dazzling glimpse of a Heaven in which one God sat upon a throne of light, and judged and tried the spirits of men. There is no such record in all the histories. The psalms which began with David, breathe forth the deepest emotions of our race to-day. The wisdom which throughout all the tenacious East bears the name of Solomon, has never been outpassed by any successor. And when we descend the course of the ages and come to a still more glorious and wonderful history, it is Jerusalem still which is the scene both of tragedy and triumph, of the greatest and most wonderful life which was ever lived among men.

We are told that the successive histories in which all this line of life and being is preserved, having now been exposed to the researches of modern criticism, have been found to be untrustworthy, and that all our views of historical truth, and all our faith in ancient and sacred personages, must be given up. The labours of half-a-dozen learned Germans working by no light except that of their own genius, upon the most ancient literature in the world, amid all the difficulties attending research in a language which contains nothing else with which to compare or collate the works under examination, and belonging to a period when language was being formed, and when science, either in that or in any other region, did not exist,

forms the sole standing-ground for this demand. Very few people know the Hebrew language, or are able to test these assertions, except by such light of ordinary criticism as they may happen to possess, by the laws of literature and the force of nature; but I think that few, comparatively, will be tempted to transfer a faith, in which they have been trained from their childhood, to a small group of unknown persons, whose motives are dubious, and their methods more ingenious than ingenuous; and to reject on their authority, as a series of often fraudulent fables, the history so full of nature, so instinct with every feeling of humanity, which has been the food of our imagination and the inspiration of our thought, all our lives. It is a blind confidence which is required by them, not an intelligent faith. When we say that these writers are inspired by dubious motives, we mean that they are moved by a foregone conclusion, the determined conviction that everything which is based on supernatural influences, and records communications between God and man, is necessarily untrue—which is a very large assumption to begin with. The disingenuousness of their methods is a matter which could only be set forth in detail, but will, we imagine, strike the ordinary reader who has himself no *parti pris*. I have no claim to set myself forth as one who has any authority in these matters, but I may say on my own part, what every individual has a right to say, that to transfer my faith and confidence from the writers of the Old Testament to the Herrn Wellhausen, Kuenen, etc., would seem to me the wildest insanity. Moses I know and Samuel I know, but who are these? To me, and to far the greater number of readers, they are but names and no more: and to pin my faith to their utterances in any matter either human or divine is what I am incapable of doing. The little which I have read of these utter-

ances does not impress me with any sense of reality. To listen to a dull voice proclaiming authoritatively that this one verse in a narrative is true and all the rest fictitious: that this little group of words is to be received as genuine, but the other part is a modern interpolation (by modern being understood a date two thousand seven, or five, hundred years ago), conveys neither satisfaction nor enlightenment to my mind. I have some small knowledge of how human character is depicted, and the means by which a man who has departed from this world is made to live and breathe again: and I know that this is not done as a bird's nest is constructed, by thieving here and there, a scrap from one and a scrap from another. There are but two ways which I can recognise in literature of producing a recognisable and genuine human being: the one is by the tale of his life as it happened: the other is by the effort of genius conceiving and creating such a man, under great laws of truth to nature which cannot be transgressed. And the history of the Bible is above all things biographical, the records of individual lives. These men are no things of shreds and patches, but human beings far more clearly distinguishable, far more real than the moles of erudition who poke about the roots of all history, and endeavour to make the world as blind as themselves.

I must add that I have read a little, but only a little, of the original critics themselves: but some of their English exponents, and their great French disciple and commentator M. Renan, are sufficiently practicable reading, and require no learning to understand. The information of the latter is so minute, not to say self-confident, that the careless reader may well be confounded by his light-hearted assumptions of knowledge. He can tell little details about the construction of the Pentateuch so that it is scarcely possible to doubt that he must

have private intelligence on the subject, if not that the different editions, "redactions," of which he discourses so glibly, must have been entered at some ancient Stationers' Hall, of which the register has fallen into his hands. M. Renan tells us cheerfully that no such person as Abraham ever existed, and that on another page of his own book (*Le Peuple d'Israel*) there will be found "*des données plus solides*" upon this imaginary personage. But when we turn, somewhat anxiously, to that previous page, we find nothing but the statement of M. Renan, unsupported even by any suggestion of proof —a statement which seems to me the least solid of all foundations of belief. That he is also certain that David was merely a skilful performer on various instruments, but did not write any psalms, on the authority of the book of Jasher, is a confusing statement, and awakens an impression in the mind that the book of Jasher is a new document which may throw much light upon the old. But when we find that M. Renan knows no more of the book of Jasher than we ourselves do—that is, by means of two very brief allusions to it in the historical books of the Old Testament—that impression gives way to another very distinct one, which is, that the device of throwing dust in our eyes is not a new one, but is very ingenious, and a favourite method in this argument. This is the proof he brings forward to invalidate the force of a tradition which, according to his own showing, has been persistent and unbroken for two thousand eight hundred years among the most tenacious people in the world. An English expositor of the same doctrines, a clergyman, but too insignificant to name, varies this assertion further, and informs us very confidently that David wrote nothing but drinking songs: and this on the authority of a verse in the Prophet Amos, where he upbraids the careless for their indifference to the fate of

their country while occupied with smaller matters, such as inventing instruments of music, like David. The reader will judge whether his faith in Abraham or in David—men whom he has known from his youth up, of whom he has in his hands the unvarnished record, in which there is naught extenuate, but everything good and bad impartially set down—is shaken by such assertions.

The chief principle laid down by the new criticism is that the laws of Moses, and all the authoritative teaching of the Old Testament, were gradually invented, put together, and made into a code, by a series of priestly writers, amplifying and enlarging in every generation the religious system which put an unlimited sway into their hands, forging, interpolating, inventing in one case a whole new book of the law, at one stroke, in the name of God, and under the lying pretence that it was all ancient and directly inspired by him. Their own principle is the antagonistic one that nothing came from God at all, that there is no supernatural authority for anything, that communications between God and man are impossible, and therefore could not be. We have thus two parties to the debate, according to their ideas, occupying an exactly similar standing ground, both working towards a foregone conclusion: the priests and scribes to invent their law, and make it as lifelike as possible; the critics to prove that it is all invention; neither one nor other caring much for that ideal Truth in whose name so many lies are accumulated, but only seeking "proof," which is a very different thing, of their own theories. Of the priests and the scribes far off in the mist of the ages we can ill judge, save by these works which they have left, and which, to most of us, prove the marks of their true origin very clearly: but of the critics we are at full liberty to judge, for they do not conceal the fact that

everything they do is done with the distinct motive of proving their own negative. M. Renan rejoices, as the accomplished end of their inquiries, that every one is now able to form his own romance about the origin of religion, it being clearly proved that no religion has any supernatural origin, and that God, if there is a God, never spoke to man at all. In what then can the unlearned take refuge? In proofs like those quoted above? in the disintegration of a consistent and living record? My own conclusion is very simple. I will take Herr Wellhausen's word for nothing, above all for nothing on which he has formed his theory before he began to inquire into the subject. I will take M. Renan's word for less than nothing, were that possible, because he has abundantly proved himself incapable of judging in respect to all the higher mysteries of human character, thought, and feeling. Abraham I know and David I know: but who are these?

In speaking thus, I speak only as one of the masses, unacquainted with the ancient language in which these researches are carried on, as is the case of most people, and entirely unqualified to enter into its earliest utterances, or judge in any matter of codexes or subtleties of accent for myself. I cannot understand how, setting aside the only record in existence of those times, a man of our own can pronounce authoritatively that another certain man living three thousand years ago did not do what that record says he did, and what all the ages since, and especially his own nation, by all its traditions, consistent and unbroken, have asserted and believed him to have done. Without that record we may as well say that no such person as David ever existed, as the reader knows it has been already asserted there was no such person as Abraham. But why, in the face of that only witness, admitting his existence, we should take from

him those works by which he is most chiefly known, I am unable to conceive. The use of criticism may justifiably come in to examine and judge, according to the differing style and references of the Psalms, which may be most surely attributed to David, and which to later writers. This commends itself to reason. I do not think the other does so, especially as I find nothing but mere sweeping denial of a fact which rests not only upon the assertion of the only existing witnesses, but on the unbroken tradition of a people whose records are avowedly the most ancient and the most continuous of all nations on the earth. I believe it has been quite impossible (in a very much less important matter) to come to any certain conclusion in respect, for example, to the so-called poems of Ossian, a publication of this century, of avowedly modern redaction. Are they genuine? are they not so? It is difficult to believe that any natural and genuine bard ever uttered anything so inflated and artificial: yet it is equally impossible to deny that there is foundation in the floating traditions of the Highlands for much that was published by Macpherson. Thus, in a question of our own age, with all the materials within our reach, no absolute certainty has ever been attained, notwithstanding that the internal evidence is against those high-flown strains. But in the case of the Psalms of David, the internal evidence is all in favour of the identity of the poet. They are not high-flown: they are the voice of a natural man of high genius and strong emotions in the very circumstances in which David is allowed to have been placed. So natural are they, utterances so true of the troubled or the thoughtful mind in the midst of the struggles of life, that our deepest emotions find expression in them to-day. What object, then, can there be in seeking for them another author? The Bacon to that Shakspeare must have lived with him,

suffered with him, rejoiced with him, if it is not himself who thus pours forth his heart, in the fields of Bethlehem, under the great stars almost projected out of heaven in their grandeur—or in the high places of Israel, and the gates through which, with songs and rejoicing, he carried the Ark of the Lord. Who is it? what closest comrade? what dearest friend? what all-devoted poet? if it is not David, the sinner and sorrowful, the man of passion and strife, of penitence and confession, the man we know? To another man whom I do not know, whom no one ventures to name, I will not transfer the songs that have been sung as his for three thousand years, the first strains of divine poetry ever revealed to mine and to many another infant soul.

This book, it will be seen, has no claim upon the attention of the erudite. Let them not lose ten tickings of their watch on this unprofitable writing. It is addressed only to those for whom the soil of Palestine, so fondly and so long known as the Holy Land, is peopled with the known and loved, the poets and sages and kings with whom we are familiar as with the records of our own lives: and consecrated to all time by One, more wonderful than it had entered into the heart of man to conceive, until he came, the climax and divine completion of the old world, the divine leader, teacher, and Lord of the new.

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PART I.—THE HOUSE OF DAVID.[1]

CHAPTER I.

THE SHEPHERD OF BETHLEHEM.

IN the days when Israel first desired a king, when the troubled period of the Judges had come to an end, and rising strength and numbers impelled the Hebrews to a more full and thorough carrying out of the conquest of their promised land, one of the strong little cities peculiar to the country, where every village was planted upon a hillside, for natural defence and strength, stood in an exceptionally strong position, surrounded on three sides by the ridges of protecting hills, a city of the Jebusites, which, during all these wild years of war and bloodshed, had retained its little nationality, and withstood the assaults of the invaders. In the early days, when all as yet was chaos in history, the strangers from the wilderness, swarming into the land, took and lost again many strongholds, which were reoccupied by their native inhabitants as the fluctuating horde rose and fell, and a fairer region, or one more ready for their uses, tempted an individual band, even after victory, to stream on to further conquests, indifferent to those already made. In this way the Jebusite city would seem more than once to have fallen and risen again. But when David became

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king, and united, after civil war and many disturbances, the whole nation of Israel under one head, something in the form of a capital, or centre of royal authority, from whence laws might proceed, and where government should dwell, must have become necessary. David was at this time living in Hebron, at the farther end of his kingdom, a place with no claim either to central position or special strength. Saul, his predecessor, had, it would appear, entertained no idea of royal state or central authority. He was a man of war, and no statesman; the experiment of kingship was new, against all the previous ideas of the tribes: and the first king, in his confused and troubled intelligence, and life of excitement, warfare, and mistake, had little time for those ideas of consolidation and permanent establishment which are necessary for the maintenance of authority and government. We are not told in what way David was directed towards the little stronghold of the Jebusites as the site of his throne. It would seem to have been his own personal choice, not indicated to him by any oracle. He must have been acquainted with it in his youth, must have skirted the hill on which it stood many times in the course of his early wanderings and dangers; and lover of Nature, and of all things beautiful as he was, no doubt the little city set on a hill, always so charming an object, as well as the more practical recommendation of those steep slopes and ridges of rock almost impregnable to the efforts of early warfare, must have caught his dreaming eyes on many occasions long before he was conscious that one day or another he should there found a royal city and set up a throne.

The spot had other associations, though they are not mentioned in the narrative, and probably have been enlarged and dwelt upon only in later times. If there was any tradition of Abraham's sacrifice lingering about the

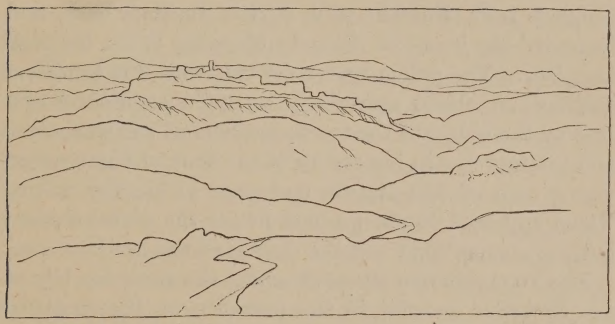
green but rocky hill which lay opposite the Jebusite city, it must have been faint and dim, especially as, at that time, when places of sacrifice were many, and every famous inhabitant had somewhere built an altar, even so great and memorable a sacrifice as that of Abraham's would scarcely bear the importance which has attached to it in later days. We have no reason to suppose that the young warrior had as yet conceived the great idea of a temple to be placed upon that twin hill, and the double strength of altar and throne to be thus given to the capital of his kingdom. But the Jebusite city at once pleased his eye and satisfied his mind as adapted for his purpose. It was, if not in an absolutely central position, as near so as could be, while still within the vicinity and protection of the tribe of Judah, the kindred and natural partisans and followers of the new king. As it stood there, high on its rocky height, looking over the rounded summit of Moriah to the loftier slopes of the mountain now known to us with all its pathetic and sacred associations as the Mount of Olives, the sun dwelling upon it in all his course from east to west, the steep streets in it so strong that the blind and the lame, according to the brag of its elders, were enough to defend it even against that man of valour, the great chief and warrior David—the little city was full to him of every fierce and every gentle attraction, a much envied prize, a place which had scorned and defied him, a mount of vision and beauty satisfactory to all the poetic fancies of his heart. That jest about the blind and the lame would seem specially to have piqued the young conqueror who had overcome so many things and was not now to be daunted, only excited and drawn on by the temerity of the rash Jebusites, a little people of no account, who thus dared and defied the Lord's anointed. And we know that neither these feeble defenders nor all the strength of

the townsmen could keep out the victorious bands of Judah. The city was taken, the fortress, high upon the western height, and all the low square and windowless hovels which hung about it. In all probability there has been little change since then in the strange little dark dwellings which Arabs and Syrians still inhabit in our own days, and which are rather shelters from the sun by day and the dew by night for a people whose life is chiefly spent in the open air, than dwellings such as we understand. Many a hillside throughout Palestine still shows around the one point of distinction, the fort or mosque which is its centre, those level lines, square and low, with openings of wide doorways and flat roofs of mingled clay and straw, or something less savoury still, which are the houses natural to the soil, often expanding into chambers darker, yet cooler still, wrought out in the rock below or behind.

Such, no doubt, was the city which David took, and which he made into the city of David, the stronghold of Zion, a city which has had more influence on the world than any other on the face of the earth. Great has been the power of Athens, great that of imperial Rome, but from Jerusalem has come an inspiration more lofty, an influence more continuous than either. The springs of life which rose within that rocky enclosure flow yet through all the world—through all our world it would perhaps be more just to say, seeing that as yet the far-distant East has been little influenced by them: though it would be indeed a mistake to assert that the creed of Mahomet was unconnected with that potent fountain-head from which it has derived almost all that is worthy in it. In the meantime, however, our object is more limited than to discuss the influence which that little strip of country, that little rocky stronghold, have had upon the world. In the first place comes its actual early

history, and that of the Eastern hero and warrior, the shepherd, the poet, the feudatory chieftain, the king of Israel, who first made for it an everlasting name.

David, the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah and the town of Bethlehem or Ephrath—the latter being the ancient name of the time of the patriarchs—was the youngest of a large family possessing land and some importance in the district, which was one of much agricultural and pastoral wealth. The soft slopes on which



DISTANT VIEW OF BETHLEHEM.

the town is placed, the green and smiling valley, broader than those ravines among the hills which are so characteristic of the land of Judea, give it a character of peacefulness and primitive wealth. The gray town lies along the side of the hill in a prolonged line, as if it never had been gathered together for protection under any rude little stronghold; and indeed there is little record of fighting about this chosen and fertile spot. The valley is so green, so wide and level, that it might almost, in this land of rocks and hills, be called a plain; and, no doubt, all that genial expanse was filled with corn and productive trees, while the grazing land occupied the

farther slopes and edge of the valley. Though Jesse was a substantial man, rich enough to send supplies to his sons with the army, and offerings to propitiate their captain, his household, like all families of the time, was fully occupied by the care of the family property and possessions, on a footing very little different from that of the servants born in the house, who were a sort of humble brethren and counted among its children. David was the shepherd-boy, the lowest and least skilled of the brothers in those early days, when Samuel, the old prophet from Ramah, paid a visit to their city, and honoured the house of Jesse by choosing it for his resting-place. The public reason for this visit was to offer a sacrifice, an object apparently accepted as natural and just by the elders of the town; but Samuel's chief motive and interest was in his review of the sons of Jesse, seven young men of fine stature and good looks, any one of whom appeared to the prophet fit for the divine choice; but not among them was the chosen of the Lord.

The youngest was absent, keeping the sheep—a boy of no particular account in the presence of the firstborn and his stalwart brethren, yet a beautiful lad, ruddy and fresh as the dews of the morning, as are still the handsome and gentle race which inhabit Bethlehem. In the leisure of his occupation—the most thoughtful and poetical of all rural pursuits—no doubt this youth had begun to feel the rising of the poet's passion, the elation and inspiration of that gift which more than any other lifts up the heart. The light that never was on sea or shore lit up for him the beloved valley, the encircling hills. He had already seen in his waking dreams, in the early light, the sun, all radiant in triumph and glory, come forth like a bridegroom from his chamber: and had considered the heavens which God had made, when suddenly, as the day ended, the moon and the stars came forth,

silently proclaiming the praises of the Lord. All these natural sounds and sights had entered into his heart, which was full of that tender piety of youth not always maintained in maturer life, which is one of the most beautiful aspects of humanity. That he also possessed great courage and strength is evident from the statement of his struggle with the lion and the bear in defence of his flocks. But great as was the promise of his early years, young David, amid the members of the household, was but the junior—a youth unacquainted with the world and its fiercer enjoyments of battle and raid, at the time of the old prophet's visit. How it was that the anointing of David, which was Samuel's special mission, attracted so little notice, it is difficult to tell; but neither the family nor David himself seem to have attached any importance to it. It must have appeared to them only a special kindness, a mark of affectionate interest in the youth from the old man, and was probably rather a favour accorded to Samuel himself, to show him where the king more worthy than Saul was to be found, than any sign of future sovereignty made known to David. His brothers do not even taunt him with it, as Joseph's brethren taunted him with his dreams, though the firstborn, the head of the house, was so wroth with his presumption on an after-occasion in venturing to put himself forth as the champion of Israel. That such compliments were not unknown may be seen from various allusions throughout the sacred writings; "Thou anointest my head with oil," David himself says in the 23d Psalm, meaning, it is evident, a sign of favour and kindness, not a sacred consecration. When the sacrifice and the feast which Samuel came to make at Bethlehem were accomplished, the townsfolk, no doubt, escorted the old prophet back upon his way to his house at Ramah, young David, to whom he had shown such special favour, first among the

nimble youths that ran by the old man's side as he ambled upon his mule along the narrow paths between the fields, as still the young attendants run, to anticipate any wish of the great man they escort and accompany, to lead his beast over the hard places of the way, and render him that reverential homage which is never so perfect as in the East. And then the soft landscape, the young shepherd-lad disappear from our vision for a time, and the prophet goes his way to the disappointments that awaited him—the endless chidings and heart-burnings which attended the troubled path of Saul.

Of the shepherd's youthful life we have no further record unless in the songs which, whether produced then or in an after day, are doubtless the product of his early thoughts and experiences as he watched his flocks by night, like those other shepherds in the same fields to whom the birth of David's son and Lord was announced in the after ages—or led them about during the day by hillside and deep valley, by the green pastures and beside the quiet waters. Perhaps he did not acquire so much command of language in his early youth as to compose that Psalm which we all know so well: but it must have been floating in his mind as he led his sheep over the pleasant slopes and flowery turf of his father's pastureland. The reader will forgive me if I quote that Psalm in the version dear to Scotland—the first that every child in that country learns, the homeliest, yet faithfullest translation of David's shepherd song—

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green: He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.
My soul He doth restore again;
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness,
Ev'n for His own name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill:
For Thou art with me; and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still.
My table Thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes;
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.

'Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me:
And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be."

Another picture never to be obliterated came into his dreaming soul when he sat by night, with that great Eastern heaven stretched out above him—the balmy breath of the wonderful atmosphere, the great stars so near in the pulsations of ineffable light, the broad serene calm of the moon.

"When I consider the heavens,
The work of Thy hands,
The moon and the stars,
Which Thou hast ordained;
What is man,
That Thou art mindful of him?
Or the son of man,
That Thou visitest him?"

Modern critics are eager to assure us that these wonderful words could not have come from the lips of the shepherd youth of Bethlehem. But there is no proof to be given of this assertion that can weigh for a moment against the long-continued tradition in their favour of his tenacious race, the only one on earth which can claim any historical connection with times beyond the farthest ken of the science of history. They have borne his name for thousands of years: they follow all the indications of his life. Few poems even of the latest times can have a more satisfactory guarantee.

Thus he sat and sang his happy songs in the pleasant valley and upon the fragrant hill, with the low line of the roofs of Bethlehem, and the distant enclosure of his father's house shining under the broad radiance of that Eastern moon, and all manner of great thoughts swelling in his youthful bosom, ambitions perhaps—the vague ecstasy of those visions of distinction and fame, and of making a great name, which are common to the dreaming boy, whether in the east or in the west, in ancient ages or at this day. He who invented instruments of music in his latter days, and took so much pains with the choirs and anthems of the national worship, we may be sure had made himself some shepherd's pipe upon which to play, more melodious, let us hope, than the doleful Arab pipe which sounds upon those slopes in the present age. In that same valley, so full of associations, Ruth, the young widow from the land of Moab, whose name has become a symbol of faithful affection, gleaned "among the alien corn," and won the heart of the rich landowner Boaz; and in an age scarcely then forgotten Rahab, another foreign woman of less creditable antecedents but equal faith, came up from the deep banks of the Jordan into this fertile and tranquil place, and found, we may be permitted to suppose, in the house of one of the men whose lives she had saved at Jericho, a home and refuge. The blood of both these women ran in the veins of Jesse's son. He was thus of kin to other races, with a mingling in him of foreign instincts, and perhaps had inherited tastes and dreams of beauty and luxury unknown to the desert-wanderers of Israel from the older civilisation of the rich Jericho and the cities of Moab. But chief of all, he had the blood of the conquerors in his veins, the tradition of those victorious bands who had overrun the rich country, and pulled one by one the little monarchs of the land from their seats. His thoughts were of all these things

while he fulfilled his youthful occupation about the pleasant hills. An English youth with perhaps a Spanish grandmother, with the tradition of some dazzling beauty from the East among his progenitors, might thus feel himself the inheritor of all the races, mingling the romance of his foreign ancestresses with the masterful confidence of the Englishmen who have conquered and assimilated all these alien glories. And David, in the fair country in which he was born, must have felt the thrill of the stranger inspiration, the poetry of the beautiful women thus made to contribute to the perfection of his race. I have heard a hot theorist deny the proposition disagreeable to him, that our Lord Himself, according to the flesh, was a Jew, by reference to this, so far back, mingled parentage, the woman of Moab and the woman of Jericho —a very futile argument. But to David, though a Hebrew of the Hebrews, they were not far back, and the romance and tradition of them was warm in his veins. Here she of Jericho must have passed in the conqueror's train, clinging perhaps to the desert warrior whom she had saved, and who had saved her in return; and here Ruth had wandered, forlorn among the women of the place, with no one to take her part save the astute old woman in the village whom she had followed far from her own people. Thus every element of poetry and romance lay about young David's feet as he led his sheep through the gate at which his forefather Boaz plucked off his kinsman's shoe, and past the well for whose waters he longed afterwards in the exhaustion of battle. Poetry and romance are not the ideas which many people associate with the Old Testament narratives, and yet how full of both these records are!

The curious incidental description of how the youth of Bethlehem, on account of his fame as a musician, was sought to soothe the troubled moods of Saul, is inde-

pendent of chronology; yet this must have occurred between the time of Samuel's visit to Bethlehem and that important expedition to the army to see his brethren which decided David's after fate. It is strange to find Saul inquiring who was the stripling who went forth to defy Goliath after the intimate intercourse which apparently preceded this, when we are told that Saul "loved greatly" the young harpist who stood and played before him when his fits of gloom and depression occurred. It might be that when the king saw the lightly-clad shepherd youth with his sling going forth in face of the two armies, he could not believe it possible that this could be David whom he had just seen armed in his own breastplate, and therefore in his astonishment imagined that a new champion had arisen. But this of course is only a conjecture, as everything must be which is concerned with all incidents beyond the record. Nothing could be more picturesque and vivid than the account of that crisis in the young hero's life. The scene was one of those narrow valleys which are the most characteristic features of the land of Judah. A few slightly sloping fields lie on either bank of the stream—a small thread of water in a very broad stony bed, such as is to be seen constantly in the East, and which travellers who have not gone so far will remember in Italy and the south of France—evidences of the moment when swollen by rain the little stream becomes a flood, and rages between those wide banks which are so disproportionate to its usual phase. It is but a thread of water, a brooklet easy to step across during most of the year. On either side rise the hills upon which the rival armies were ranged, contemplating each other from a safe distance, neither ready to make the rush into the comparatively level ground below.

By the winding ways among the hills, strong passes

here and there, and slopes of pastureland, David had come eager and expectant from Bethlehem, with his burden of parched corn for his brothers, and home-made cheeses for a present to their captain; and one of the first things that attracted him, eager for every sign of battle, would be the sight at which the two armies were looking on, and which interrupted every movement. Between the opposing hosts upon the bank of the stream, in sight of both, strode forth the swashbuckler, Goliath, daring the armies of Israel, a big man, blazing in his rich armour under the sun, with the huge spear in his hand which has been part of the equipment of so many giants since his time. There are few things more apt to be exaggerated in the most exact of records than the size of an exceptionally tall and strong champion, and it is evident that David himself was able to wield the giant's sword in later days, so that it is not necessary to conclude that there was anything miraculous about his great size. That the sight of him, shouting out his defiance in the narrow valley, should have caught the attention and fired the spirit of young David with that sudden perception of the opportunity which to a youth of genius and daring is all that is lacking, is the most natural incident, as is also the impatience and displeasure of his elder brothers, no doubt aware of something of those high-reaching dreams which were in the lad's mind, as if he were better than the others of his family. "I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart," cries Eliab, vexed with the lad's eager question, and seeing the sudden flame lighting up in his eyes; "with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" The few sheep were David's concern, not the battles which were for his elders and betters. The reproach is as old as human nature, and ready to be repeated to-day.

David made no more reply than any other young hero made light of among his kindred. He took his way into some other indifferent group, indifferent to himself, wholly occupied with the brag of the Philistine and the humiliation of having no man among them who would venture to meet him: and listened to every word that was said. Great promotion and honour, the king's daughter to be his wife, a place unequalled among the host which stood there overawed at the sight of the bully. It is too early an age for love-stories, or it might be imagined that David had already raised his eyes, as to one altogether out of his reach, to the daughter of Saul, the sister of Jonathan who loved him. But it must be remembered also that love had already begun to bear a part in the history of the Hebrews, which no other ancient history has allowed. Jacob, that man of riches and rapacity, true parent of the grasping Jew of modern times, had loved his Rachel like any Christian knight, transmitting thus from the very dawn of human records an absolute romance such as never entered into the thoughts of any graceful Greek. But it would be trivial and unnecessary to bring in such a notion to the story here. David had evidently everything to gain, had there been no Michal in the case: the opportunity first of all of distinguishing himself, of vindicating his nation, of beating down the pride of the oppressor—objects enough, any one of them, to set a gracious spirit on fire, not to speak of the still deeper impulse of a high indignation against the heathen braggart who dared to set himself up in his brute strength against the living God. David in his after years was far from being a blameless man, as everybody knows. He fell under the temptations and abused the privileges of power, and his passions were strong and unrestrained; but when he came fresh from those fields where he had considered

the heavens the work of God's hands, and where, in the fervour of his youth he had felt himself to be the object of a heavenly care and love more deep than his own devotion to the few sheep in the wilderness, which yet he had guarded at risk of his life—the passion of his young soul for the honour of the God of Israel, the living God, the Lord who needed not that His champion should bear sword or spear, was as a fire in his heart. Something of the absolute trust which is more easy to youth than to any other period of life, an almost braggadocio of self-abnegation, generous scorn of all precaution, the confidence not so much of a hero as of a child, is in his attitude and equipment. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" man enough to keep a whole vulgar host in dread before his challenge, and to fill his own side with arrogant triumph, yet at the mercy of a shepherd's sling in the hand of a lad who stood for God. The favourite subject of poetry ever since, nay, the highest theme of all that has been sung and said on earth, is this triumph of faith, this victory of the simple and small over the proud and strong, the humble hero over embattled hosts, the champion of the oppressed over the oppressors. It is not to be found in any primitive literature but that of the chosen people. Strength and valour are the universal subjects of the applauses of the olden ages, whether cultured Greek or wild Scandinavian. The Hebrew poet alone has celebrated that race which is not to the swift, and the battle which is not to the strong.

The death of Goliath threw the army of the Philistines into the greatest disorder; the greater part fled dismayed, making a stand here and there, band by band, as in that spot where there was "a parcel of ground covered with barley," where Eleazer the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, interrupted them, and destroyed that remnant of the

retreating army.[1] "The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines," David no doubt, if not at the head, at least in the front rank of the wild triumphant host, whose spirit, tamed by oppression, had suddenly come back, as in the days of their fathers, at the touch of victory. What the fight and slaughter must have been is shown by that unfortunate utterance of popular applause with which the young hero of the fight was received as the triumphant army swept and straggled along towards Gibeah, the headquarters of Saul, the women streaming out of every village to celebrate their victory. Not very long before the same rejoicing groups had come out upon the passage of Saul proclaiming his name to all the echoes: and the fickleness of that popular applause, its ready transfer from one to another, came bitterly to the knowledge of the deserted king, as it has done to hundreds since—"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Had there been no contrast, had the shouts been confined to David's personal prowess, it would have been less invidious; but the comparison went to the very heart of the leader, whose place was no longer the first in the opinion of the turbulent people so little accustomed as yet to any veneration of the crown. Thus the star of David rose while that of Saul began to set.

The record of Scripture is sternly impartial, whosoever for the moment is its subject. Jacob is chosen to carry on the line of Israel because, no doubt, of the strength and native resolution of his crafty and persistent nature; but it is over Esau that our hearts soften and our tears

[1] This feat of arms M. Renan, rejecting the whole story of Goliath, states wildly, on his own authority, as the chief incident in the encounter, graciously, however, allowing David to have fought by the side of Eleazer. It is not certain that the incident took place, indeed, on this precise occasion, but I think we are justified in accepting it as having done so.

fall. In the same way Saul, fallen from his high estate, cast down to the very depths of that excitable and sensitive nature which made him so subject to all external influences, makes the heart of the reader ache with pity: and but for the wild chivalry and generosity which soon show themselves in David, would draw away our sympathies altogether in his forlorn and heaven-abandoned kinghood, in his wild impetuous hastiness and the mistakes of his desperation, from that young and applauded hero, of whom it is said that all he did pleased the people. David, however, escapes that unpleasing contrast of the prosperous with the unfortunate by the quickly following romance of his story. In the next access of that partial madness to which Saul was subject, which showed itself in raving utterances, having apparently some resemblance to the rapture of the prophets, David was called from his military command, as he had been called before from his sheepfold, to soothe the distracted king with music; and Saul, in his insane excitement—not without method still, the bitterness of his soul breaking through the mist of his faculties—snatched a javelin from the wall, and flung it at his supplanter in the affections of his people. This would seem to have been the first overt act of that dire jealousy which was part of the madness, yet part of the anguish too—a passion which is so comprehensible and so piteous. For not only did Michal love this upstart of the fields, but Jonathan, the heir, if any thought of heirship was, and clearly the beloved son and constant companion of his father, loved him too, exchanging with him the closest vows of brotherhood and admiring friendship. Thus the young supplanter had penetrated into the very domestic stronghold, stealing away the household hearts that were his own from the unfortunate chief.

It is a contrast full of all the elements that touch the

hearts of men, and one cannot but wonder how the commentators, whose criticisms are supposed to destroy the consistency of these records, making of them a mass of disjointed scraps put together to serve certain purposes of statecraft by various hands at various times, have been able to free themselves from the charm and spell of human sympathy which is in these marvellous narratives. Two more distinct human creatures than Saul and David never existed, nor can we imagine a story more deeply moving, more tragically true to nature. The great warrior, now fading from the glory of his youth, never a man of judgment, hasty, passionate, mistaken, unable to learn the self-command and obey the restraints that hem about the footsteps of a ruler, yet full of a certain primitive greatness, standing high above the mass of ordinary men, both in the heyday of his valour and the tragedy of his despair; and modest in his presence, reverent of his office, yet perhaps scarcely capable of keeping out of his thoughts the pæans of the admiring Israelites, the consciousness already of knowing better and of being more capable of rule—the younger hero, more engaging, more attractive than the moody and excitable Saul could ever have been, a man to steal the hearts of all who came near him, young, fortunate, full of charm. David made no mistakes in that difficult position—almost a son of the house, deeply beloved by some of its chief members, yet hated and feared by its head: whereas Saul's career had been full of mistakes, and he had never been able to find the medium between hasty over-obedience and wilful transgression of the commandment. He must have seen that Jonathan, with his heart completely stolen by that interloper, would strike no blow and make no stand for the kingship. It was the youth of Bethlehem, the shepherd-lad of the valley of Elah, the mere musician who had

called forth, as such menials do, a certain tribute of easy praise, to whom the eyes of all men were turning. To David the Ephrathite, the son of Jesse—to him who had been nobody till the other day, and was nobody save as the king's favour made him! It is but too easy to understand the exasperation, the keen sense as of a useless struggle, yet fierce determination to get rid of and overthrow this disturber of his life, which was in the mind of Saul.

And how full of life and nature is the whole scene; the consultations of the younger members of the household who love him with the persecuted and threatened David, the troubled talks and anxious expedients for his safety. "My father will do nothing without showing it to me," says the unquiet and disturbed Jonathan who "delighted much" in his sworn brother and friend: and again and again the crisis was tided over, the catastrophe averted, sometimes by Jonathan's anxious explanations, sometimes by a new campaign against the Philistines in which, it being well known that David would need no wile to place him in the forefront of the battle, the king might always hope that a chance dart would deliver him from his rival. At last when the danger could be averted no longer, the brother and sister to whom David was so dear had to take the matter into their own hands. It was Michal's part to get him off suddenly from the threatened destruction, letting him "down through a window," doubtless upon the outer wall, on the summit of one of the rocky slopes of Gibeah, where Saul's residence was. While the enraged and gloomy king waited for the return of his messengers, to bring him news that all was over and the danger, once for all, removed from his path, David, breathless with the sense of death so barely escaped, was already out of reach in the darkness of the night which had favoured his escape, at last

convinced of the deadly peril in which he stood, and not knowing where to find refuge. To go home to Bethlehem does not seem to have occurred to him. Probably he was not assured of any welcome there if he arrived suddenly, a fugitive from the wrath of the king; perhaps even more likely, for his father and mother were still living who could not have refused him a shelter, he was afraid to draw upon his kindred the anger and vengeance of Saul. But more near than Bethlehem, more secure than any common house, there was the old prophet at Ramah to appeal to, he who had shown so much kindness to David, who had refused to allow the feast to begin till the shepherd-boy had been called, and who had kissed and anointed the ruddy lad fresh from the fields, as he had not done to Eliab or any of the stalwart brethren. Though I think it is quite clear that David did not know what that anointing meant, yet it was a token of favour; and as he cast about in his mind where to turn for succour the recollection of Samuel must have flashed across his thoughts like a sudden light.

Nothing more wild and strange than the description of his temporary shelter with the old prophet could be. Samuel would seem to have taken the fugitive to some more secure refuge than his own open house in Ramah where for years he had judged Israel, and which would naturally be accessible on all sides to those who came to consult him, and bring their difficulties to be solved. It was to "Naioth in Ramah," "the house of learning," that he transferred himself and his guest, no doubt some secluded school of the prophets, where special instruction and training might be given to those who were to instruct the people. "The company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them"—was the sight that Saul's messengers saw when, hot in their bloody errand, they reached this place. It

was probably what we should call the college of the consecrated Levite youths, studying their future functions under the superintendence of the deeply experienced and highly gifted old man, who had served God from his infancy, and was the acknowledged head of all sacred science in Israel. That this instruction, however, was accompanied by ecstatic manifestations now coming upon one, now upon another, would seem to be implied in the strange narratives that follow. The messengers, men of the sword, soldiers of Saul's irregular and lately formed army, came suddenly, unaware, we may suppose, of what they were about to see, thinking only of their fierce commission, into the midst of this wonderful scene, and excited, overawed, seized by that contagion of strange emotion which the primitive mind is so easily affected by, fell into a nervous imitation of what they saw, and "prophesied" also. So still the rude recruits of a "revivalist" meeting are sometimes affected with an incomprehensible yet evidently in many cases unfeigned convulsion of nature unaccustomed to such strong spiritual stimulants. That the same effect should be produced upon the second band, who saw their comrades thus weeping and praying and calling out to God, was perhaps less wonderful. And when Saul himself came after them, fierce and troubled, his mind already half-overturned with hate and terror and revenge, and perhaps remorse—moved by the sight of those scenes where his first consecration had taken place, where he had previously shared the vigils and the ecstasies of the young prophets, the wonder is still less that his impassioned spirit should have given way. So many recollections must have risen before him—the high aims and resolutions of his youth, the self-devotion of which he must then have felt himself capable, the high renunciation of everything but the service of God and the care

of God's people: and now what was this erring and passionate man? a king who had failed in his mission, the anointed of the Lord turned into a miserable avenger of his own unworthy quarrel, a would-be murderer, hot to shed his neighbour's blood. All these thoughts must have overwhelmed the impassioned and despairing soul, whose hate against David was so much made up of a still deeper sense of his own inadequacy and failure. He had not seen Samuel since the day when he parted with him in anger, after the death of Agag. And here, so near the scene where his future greatness was first communicated to him, now when that greatness was so smirched and faded, and nothing but downfall and ruin before him, to feel the eyes of the prophet, which saw through and through all the wild and furious movements of his spirit, upon him once again! The wild access of passion and trouble, which he had never had sufficient self-control to restrain, burst upon him with giant force. He tore off his insignia of royalty, his garments themselves, and fell down, shouting out what wild movements of self-denunciation, of woe to Israel, of judgment, judgment, and the wrath of God, who can venture to imagine. A king whose kingdom was passing from him, a great warrior overpowered and outdone, a man who had lost all guidance, and was stumbling and crashing downward on the wrong way—and last and worst of all, who saw and knew that he was so doing through all his miserable moods, and in the severe clear shining of that old prophet's eyes.

David, it would appear, did not wait to see the issue of these strange incidents; he went back hurriedly to Gibeah as soon as he saw that the absence of his pursuers was thus ensured for a little time, and hastened to Jonathan his friend and brother. "What have I done," he said, "that your father should seek my life?" "God

forbid," said the generous young man, trying even now to defend both father and friend. "It is not so; my father will do nothing great or small without letting me know: and why should he hide this from me?" It would appear from these words that Jonathan had not been aware of that expedition to Ramah. A touching arrangement was then made between the two young men. It was close to the time of the new moon, when Saul and all great men made feasts for their households, and where David's place would naturally be an important one, both as the king's son-in-law, and as one of the great warriors and captains of Israel. Jonathan consented to make an excuse for David's absence on this occasion, and thus to ascertain the mind of Saul towards him, while David, either secretly returning to his own house, or in hiding somewhere near, awaited the issue of the trial. When this was arranged between them in some private place of meeting Jonathan drew his friend into "the field," probably near to some sacred place, to give solemnity to his engagement; and there under the cover only of the sky, beyond which, in all ages men have looked for the dwelling of God, appealed to the Supreme Disposer of events to ratify the bargain, the Lord God of Israel who knew and beheld in all their ways the sons of men. If he were not true to David, did not warn him, did not save him, "the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan" he prayed. If this story came to us without any sanction of Holy Writ, if it were but part of the epic of a Hebrew Homer, the reader would need no such solemn adjuration to convince him of the truth of Jonathan.

There followed after this a succession of the most exciting scenes. The king returned from that wild pursuit to Ramah, perhaps ashamed of his passion, perhaps in the return of his sober consciousness feeling it

advisable to make no further show of his hostility to David, who was one of the props of his throne: and prepared as usual for the feast of the new moon, himself presiding, seated "as at other times upon a seat by the wall," the head of the primitive table, with Abner by his side, his commander-in-chief. For the first day he took no notice of David's vacant place; but on the second demanded an explanation. "Why does not the son of Jesse come to meat, neither yesterday nor to-day?" Upon this question, Jonathan made the excuse that had been agreed upon. There was a feast of the family at Bethlehem, and David's brother—which looks as if Eliab was now head of the family, perhaps acting so on account of the age and weakness of Jesse, for there is still mention of the father later on—had commanded him to be present. Upon this Saul burst forth into fury upbraiding the folly of his son. "Do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion?" he cried. It was not David, not the familiar name of the household, the name too famous in Israel, which the angry king employed, but that of the alien house, the opposed clan, a name of Judah which had always assumed to be the first in Israel. "As long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground thou shalt not be established nor thy kingdom," exclaims the king, with a feeling more honourable than that of his own fierce enmity. And there can be little doubt that Jonathan himself had a prevision of this since he had already appealed to the time when David's enemies should be cut off every one from the face of the earth, and commended his own race and house to the protection of the hunted and persecuted man. Yet he stood with all the faithfulness of his nature for the fugitive. "What hath he done?" he asked, while all the company sat silent, keenly attentive of this discussion. But Saul in the

transport of his anger and disappointment and fierce incapacity to bear opposition, snatched a javelin from the wall behind him, and flung it at his son, as he had before done at the object of their quarrel. It became evident that no more was to be said, nor the name of David named again in that primitive court, where it would appear no voice was raised for the ambitious young captain but that of the heir alone.

The reader's heart goes with Jonathan, as so often in these records. Saul and David are the chief figures in the struggle, one with the painful crown of tragedy, the other the laurels and the pæans of success. But between them stands the noble young man, fated to share the sorrow and punishment which he had no hand in incurring, his sympathy all with the persecuted, his duty all with the persecutor, his love divided between them who were so fiercely separated from each other. It would seem that there had been in other matters a special closeness of union between Saul and his firstborn. They are named together in all the first campaigns of the reign before David comes upon the scene, Jonathan like a young knight-adventurer, a gallant heir-apparent, performing rash feats in which:

> "Desperate valour oft made good,
> Oft with its daring vantage rude
> Where prudence might have failed."

"My father will do nothing great or small that he does not let me know," Jonathan himself says; and "that they were lovely and pleasant in their lives," almost like twin brothers rather than father and son is the testimony given afterwards. And no sign of failure from his father's side is ever recorded of Jonathan, though he would seem to have accepted the signs of fate, and foreseen the triumph of the other who was his natural enemy and supplanter yet his most beloved friend. The situa-

tion is one that calls forth every sympathy and makes of this pure and chivalrous figure the highest light in the wonderful picture. Jonathan went forth sad and angry, with that wrath of love that "works like madness in the brain," as soon as the morning dawned after this troublous scene, and took down his bow from the wall, and called a boy from among the many retainers to go with him, striding forth with a clouded brow, as all would understand, to divert his troubled mind with a favourite exercise. "The field" in which these meetings took place must have been some sheltered spot, some hollow on the other side of the hill, where there were rocks and caves, such as abound everywhere in Palestine, in which a fugitive could be hid; for it would seem that all this time David had been lurking near, no doubt in one of these caves. There Jonathan shot his arrows according to the sign agreed upon, and perhaps with some show of impatience not to have hit a desired mark, gave his bow to his attendant as soon as the arrows had been gathered up, and sent him hastily home. When the lad had disappeared the hidden fugitive stole forth into the dewy field. It was morning, all still and solitary, before life or work had begun. These strange new circumstances, and perhaps his melancholy vigil, and the sense that his life was in the hands of this generous young prince who had adopted him as his brother, brought home, no doubt, to David the wonderful difference between himself, a homeless fugitive, and the son of Saul the king. He bowed himself three times to the ground, falling on his face, in all the abasement of Eastern reverence. He was no longer the great captain, the husband of Michal, the honoured of Israel, but once more the son of Jesse, youngest and least important, the shepherd of his humble family, of little account even in his own tribe, how much less here among the cities of Ben-

jamin. But when the friends met all these artificial distinctions would seem to have been swept away, and Jonathan and David kissed each other and wept. It was as if the friendly earth, upon which their young swift steps had gone together on many an errand both of war and peace, had been rent between them. Few words were needed, if any: the abyss was not one which could be bridged over with hopeful speech of better days and other meetings. They were silent in the rending asunder of their lives. "Go in peace; and the Lord be witness of that which is between me and thee," was all that Jonathan could say. "They wept one with another till David exceeded." The fugitive, the poet, the man of quick emotions lost his self-control in the misery of his banishment: while Jonathan, perhaps still more deeply sad, without that power of self-expression, turned back with a heavy heart to the city, where he had to put on a face of stone, and know nothing of David any more.

While he lay thus forsaken in his cave during the three days that must have elapsed between these interviews, reflecting with all the intensity of his youth upon his home so near yet so far away from him, on Michal anxious in her solitary chamber, and Jonathan more anxious still amid the laughter and mirth at his father's table—seeing most likely from his refuge the lights of the little city on the hill, hearing the shouts of the festivity, himself fasting, deserted, in danger of his life, was it with such a strain as this that he consoled himself with his courage as yet unbroken though his heart was sore?

"In the Lord put I my trust:
How say ye then to my soul:
That she should flee as a bird to the hill?

"For, lo, the ungodly bend their bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string,
To shoot privily at them that are true of heart.

"The Lord is in His holy temple,
The Lord's seat is in heaven:
His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.
The Lord trieth the righteous:
But the ungodly and him that loveth wickedness
Doth His soul abhor.

"For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;
His countenance will behold
The thing that is just."

To most minds the constant reference of the Psalmist to his enemies is a continued jar and discord: but it would be strange indeed if David in his hunted life, never from this time allowed a moment of rest, should have left out of the songs by which he encouraged his own heart amid all his troubles, any allusion to his persecutors. This Psalm, probably the first of these utterances of his soul in trouble, is purely abstract in its reference to them. They are the ungodly abhorred by God because they work wickedness, and upon whom He rains snows, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest. The fugitive, the sufferer, calls down no curses on his own account out of the patient skies.

CHAPTER II.

THE OUTLAW IN THE WILDERNESS.

THIS was the beginning of the most painful portion of David's life: that probation in the wilderness which is the portion of most men who are destined to greatness. He stole away from the neighbourhood of Gibeah, from all his brief prosperity and happiness, from his position as commander at once and minstrel, prince and poet, the favourite and the hero, whom the people loved: the companion of Jonathan, the husband of Michal: now a fugitive far more poor and solitary than ever could have been the shepherd-boy who had come so suddenly to all those distinctions. It was probably by night that he left the neighbourhood of Gibeah, escaping through the silent fields, with none of that noble retinue which was his due as a leader of Israel, yet probably a faithful retainer or two sadly following his uncertain steps across the wilds, without provisions, without arms, not knowing where he went, travelling vaguely towards the south.

The first place to which he came was Nob, where it is apparent there was at that time a sanctuary and centre of worship, though in the confusion of the period it is difficult to know precisely what this means. The geography is confused as well as the economy of the disturbed and unsettled land, still overrun with continual raids of

the hostile races which surrounded Israel on every side, and with no established centre of authority either secular or sacred. For Saul's headquarters at Gibeah were no more a royal capital than the dwellings from which the judges who preceded him had partially and confusedly ruled the people, each in his own house. And neither the ancient tabernacle of the wilderness which was at Gilead, nor the temporary re-establishment of the Ark at Kirjath-Jearim (the latter, it would seem, entirely fallen into forgetfulness), had been received as a national shrine: but each tribe or district formed, as it would seem, their own religious centre for themselves with as much of the established ritual as was within their power. David arrived faint and weary at the house of the priest, answering to the astonished question of how he came to be alone, *i.e.* with no formal retinue, by the excuse of a sudden commission and urgent business for the king, which had compelled him to leave home without aide-de-camp or officer, even without his weapons. "Give me some bread," he asked; "whatever you may have." But the priest had no bread except the sacred shewbread which he had just taken from the altar, and which, it had been commanded, was to be eaten by the Levites alone. It must thus have been on the Sabbath Day that David, fasting and faint, arrived at the sanctuary; for it was on the Sabbath that the loaves or cakes of the hallowed bread were replaced by new, and removed from the holy table. The analogy was therefore doubly complete between this and the incident in the life of our Lord to which He Himself compared it. Neither the priest nor David seem to have entertained any Pharisaical hesitations on the subject, mercy and succour having been at all times recognised as of first necessity even under the bonds of the Jewish law. When he had secured for himself and "the young men" that needful food, David

asked if there were any weapons in the peaceful shrine; and it must have been a great encouragement to his soul when the priest drew forth out of its wrappings no other than the sword of Goliath, "whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah." It must have been as if God Himself had thus laid up in store for him the weapon to which no man had so clear a right—the sign of his first and greatest victory. "There is none like that; give it to me," he said, with a fervency of utterance in which we can fully sympathise.

It is less easy, however, to understand after this sign, which must, one would suppose, have appealed to his imaginative nature by every argument of encouragement, how he should have gone to Gath girded with the very sword of their champion to seek refuge among the enemies of Israel. Perhaps in the bitterness of his soul and the extravagant despondency of the first misfortunes of youth, he took it for a sign that he was cut off from Israel, and had no resource left but to throw himself among an alien people: perhaps the very sight of it suggested the hostile city whose chief enemy was the same Saul who had cast out and was pursuing himself. And it is scarcely possible to believe that, notwithstanding the persistent national hatred, there should not have been private ties between individuals of the two races so near together within the narrow boundaries of Palestine. Thus Scots and English in the old fighting days, though nationally the deadliest enemies, yet found friends, brides, and husbands among the hostile race, and took refuge when in disgrace at home in the court of the other kingdom, always bland and complaisant to the fugitive, proving in its courtesy how much better worth serving it was than that from which he had come. There is no reason to suppose that the flight to Achish was more than the flight to an early James or Henry of a discontented or injured

baron on either side. But terror was in the soul of the fugitive. He would seem to have found threatening faces about him from the moment he entered the foreign city, which was not wonderful considering what his achievements had been. He was like Coriolanus in Corioli, a man who had gained his name at the expense of those whose succour he sought; and it was soon apparent to him that safety was not to be found there. Perhaps he had hoped that he would not be recognised, but might pass as a mere Hebrew refugee in trouble with his own people, seeking service in the neighbouring court. But he soon became aware that a soldier so distinguished could not remain unknown. "Is not this David?" said the very first officials to whom he addressed himself, "David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Before even the news was carried to Achish of this visitor whose appearance created so much commotion, David had begun to perceive how great a mistake he had made. The wonder, which was so ready to turn into a menace, as they hurried him to the king's presence, showed him his danger; and though the expedient of feigning madness was not a dignified one, it was not unusual in the East. When Achish, eager to see this newcomer, but perceiving as he thought a mere maniac, turned upon those who had excited his curiosity and alarm, scornfully with the question, "Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow into my house?" the fugitive does not seem to have lost a moment in making his escape.

What was he to do, driven out at once from Israel and from Israel's enemies? No doubt it was hard for the young man to throw himself into the life of an outlaw, to lurk in caves and desert places, to snatch a painful living from those who were weaker than himself. The son of a

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plentiful householder, of honest and well-known folk, who had probably known what it was to suffer from the incursions of such wanderers, it might have appeared to him a better way to join the enemy as Coriolanus did, to be able to enforce terms upon his old persecutor, than to become in his turn a persecutor of the peaceful dwellers in the land, with whom all his sympathies were. But David had now no resource. He went back from Gath towards his own country again, a troubled and discouraged soul, the few retainers who had followed him drooping their crests as they toiled along the plain, until they reached that strange and wild district lying between the country of the Jebusites, the as yet unknown Jerusalem, and the Dead Sea, where the soft rock of the limestone hills, gray and gloomy, is hollowed out into numberless caves enough to give such lodging as was sufficient for their primitive necessities, to many men.

The wonderful impartiality [1] of these biographies which form the Scriptural record was never more evident than in the description of the troop which gathered here about the exile. Had the story been of the Middle Ages—and it is of those daring and chivalrous times that we are most reminded by the varied and endless adventures of this wandering paladin—an air of romance would have been thrown even upon his surroundings. Knights full of devotion to the bravest among them, casting in their lot with him, resolved if need were to die with him, would have formed a circle round the hero. And that there was such a circle round David is clear. His "three mighties," and the thirty who were also examples of

[1] M. Renan, by means of those private sources of information which he evidently possesses unknown to the world, informs us that these details were probably taken from David's own accounts in later life, a sort of official narrative, such as he wished to have received in his own favour—which makes the impartiality more remarkable still.

valour, though not so distinguished as the first three, the captains of his army in later days, when it was the legitimate army of Israel—were about him from the beginning of his wanderings. But the account of his band, though picturesque and graphic, has none of this romance cast about it. "Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt (pursued by his creditors), and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him." The company of those broken men reached to the number of four hundred, some of them escaped from justice, many of them "bitter of soul"—a band of refugees dangerous to any country. The thirty or thirty-three heroes are not even mentioned in the official record, though probably they too were men with grievances like the rest. A more respectable contingent was brought to him by the arrival of his brethren and all his father's house, probably driven out from Bethlehem either by some actual attempt on the part of Saul, or terror of what he might do, and including such formidable elements as his three nephews, the sons of that unknown but evidently high-spirited mother in Israel, whose name remained to David the characteristic designation of her still more dangerous sons. The silent caves, with their far-stretching branches running deep into the entrails of the hills, suddenly filled in every corner with dark warriors, and murmurous with the hum of a crowd, form a wild and wonderful scene. These fastnesses of nature were in no way so inharmonious with the habits of the Hebrews as they would have been even with those of the wildest mediæval troop in the different climate of the North. A cave was the familiar and most secure nucleus of the homestead on many a pleasant hillside, the coolest and the safest. The darkness did not discourage them, accustomed as they were to seek refuge there from the glare of day. Each man

would bring with him for as long as it lasted his easily carried provision of parched corn, his cakes of bread and handful of fruit. There would need no hecatombs of slain cattle to maintain these eastern warriors: yet many a raid must have gone out from the stronghold of Adullam, to keep four hundred men alive—raids, however, in which the prey carried off was probably stores of bread, raisins, and figs and parched corn, as in the story of Nabal, with an occasional sheep, rather than the "lifted" cattle and utter desolation left behind them of modern reivers, a much less destructive kind of plunder. There must have been wild animals in those wild regions to make a substantial addition to the fare of the exiles. It is pleasant to find in this record of a wild and lawless episode that the outlaw of Adullam took pains to secure a safe shelter for his father and mother in Moab, where there would still be kindred on the side of Ruth to welcome her descendants.

Another addition to the numbers of this wild band, which must have been of the greatest importance to its prestige and character, soon followed in the person of Abiathar, the son and successor of the priest Ahimelech, who had received David so kindly at Nob, and whom Saul, on the malicious report of Doeg the Edomite, had sent for with all his family to Gibeah, and massacred, his own followers refusing the office, by that miscreant's hand. The young priest, who thus in terror of his life, took refuge with the outlaws, brought to them the appointed order of national worship and the permitted method of "enquiring of the Lord," whatever that may have been; and no doubt by his very presence put many scruples, in no bosom more strong than in that of the leader of the band, at rest. But not for a moment did the pursuit of Saul relax. He had justification now for all the rigour of persecution. David, though he had set up no

organised rebellion, no attempt upon the crown, was yet in arms, in self-defence, no more to be dealt with as an individual. Though he had been driven to it by the force of circumstances, and though he never raised his arm in offensive hostilities, not even Jonathan, who loved him, could plead now as in former times for the pardon of the misguided brother. Once again indeed that faithful friend came to him in the wilds where he had taken refuge, to warn him of renewed pursuit, and to repeat the covenant or oath of brotherhood between them: but after this hurried and secret meeting these two friends saw each other no more.

While shifting from one stronghold to another, from cave to forest, "in the hold" of those natural fastnesses, David had the opportunity of delivering the town of Keilah from the Philistines, a piece of legitimate work which must have delighted his soul, but to which it would seem his followers, demoralised by continual flight and that sense of being hunted like wild beasts, which destroys at once courage and self-respect, were averse, afraid of trusting themselves in the low country and having little confidence in the gratitude of men, a scepticism afterwards fully justified. Their leader insisted, however, encouraged by the promise of success from God, which must have been obtained by some dream or spiritual consciousness alone, since Abiathar, it would appear, only joined him with the ephod and recognised means of spiritual communication after the deliverance of the city. For what reason except the generous one of delivering the oppressed town and aiming a blow at the acknowledged enemies of his people, or the astute one of thus securing to himself friends and a refuge, David should have interposed in this matter, which of course was the business of the legal defenders of Israel, it would be difficult to imagine. If it

was the latter argument which moved him he was soon destined to discover how futile was any such trust. King Saul, who had not stirred to rescue the city, heard with delight that David had ventured into "a town that hath gates and bars," and at once gathered together his followers to besiege the rebel, concluding with premature triumph that "the Lord hath delivered him into my hands"; not so quickly, however, but that David had time to escape, having first assured himself that Keilah had no mind to stand a siege on his behalf. We may well imagine that the addition of six hundred outlaws (to which number the band had now increased), with the wildness of their wandering life about them, to feed and lodge, could not be an agreeable element in the life of the crowded hillside town, and acknowledge that the men of Keilah had some excuse for desiring to be rid of them. The harassed exile had nothing to do but to return to the wilderness, and once more take refuge in the caves and woods. The area of his wanderings is but a limited one, and indeed it is almost inconceivable how small the limits are, altogether, of this wonderful country so full of story and recollection and influence on the world. The inhabitants settled on the borders of those desert tracks were evidently in greater sympathy with Saul than with David, whose bands of hungry men, with neither fields nor pastures of their own by which to live, must have been a perpetual danger to their peaceful neighbours.

An instance of their dealings with these temporary neighbours is to be found in the story of Nabal, a true Eastern romance, picturesque and vivid. The rich niggard of the fields was celebrating his feast of sheep-shearing, when David's messengers, "the young men" so often described, approached him with Eastern courtesy. Their desire for a share of the good things of the

feast was less a petition than an inference: "Thy shepherds were with us and we hurt them not, nor was anything missing unto them all the time they were in Carmel. Therefore let the young men find favour in thy sight." Nabal replied to them with taunts and injuries. "There be many servants that break away from their masters," he said. "Who is this David? this son of Jesse?" One asks one's self whether David expected this defiance and insult, and thus meant to justify himself for the destruction of Nabal, and absorption of all his wealth. This at least was the effect upon him of the rash and contemptuous message. He called his six hundred desperadoes together to avenge the insult and take the spoil, an enterprise that could not but be agreeable, faring sparely as they were in their desert fastnesses with no joys of sheep-shearing, no new moon festivals in their way.

The alarm of the peaceful herdsmen, when in the midst of their feast they heard their master's insulting reply to the "young men" with their spears and swords, is easy to imagine. To have that horde brought down upon them, unarmed and unprepared as they were, simple agriculturists and shepherds, was a sentence of destruction to every harmless soul among them. And the master was such a son of Belial that no one dared speak to him. So while he bragged and plumed himself, not perhaps without a secret misgiving now that the deed was done, the dependents, who would be the first to suffer, sought the women's quarter where their wiser mistress was superintending the feast. "They were a wall to us both by day and by night," they cried in their consternation. The reader knows what the rural lady of some three thousand years ago, the rich farmer's wife of the Judean valleys, did: she took a plentiful supply of the provisions of the great pastoral establishment,

leaving, one would fear, but little for the disappointed sheep-shearers thus forced to redeem their lives at the cost of their feast—"two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine" (skins no doubt like those in the grotesque blunted shape of the animal to whom they belonged, which are still employed by the water-sellers about the streets of Syrian cities), "five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn," besides a liberal supply of fruit. Abigail was not a moment too soon; she met David and his men "by the covert of the hill" in warlike array with their swords girded on them, coming swiftly on to execute judgment. The record does not say as it does on so many occasions that Abigail was beautiful, but only that she was wise, and as is evident, possessed the gift of eloquent words. She acknowledged with the fulness of conjugal certainty and indignation her husband's folly, and also set before David the extreme inexpediency on his own part, with the future that lay before him, of making enemies or leaving memories that might be brought up against him —so powerfully that his hasty wrath was quenched. It will be remarked that the offering made was not of a kind to impoverish permanently any great house: it was the product of the wealthy establishment, not its property or means of sustenance, a gift which probably made the feast a poor one for the revellers but imposed distress or destruction upon none.

The end of the story, the death of Nabal, turned to stone by the tremendous risk he had run, and the conviction of his danger and his folly; and the reception of Abigail into that harem, in which David it must be allowed did not stint himself, reads like pure romance; but so indeed do many incidents in the most sober life.

There are two other episodes in the tale of the wanderings of David which we could understand the critics'

objection to, had it been possible to conceive that they were foisted into the record in the days of Froissart, in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. But as the most scathing criticism ventures on nothing worse than the suggestion that David's history was written some hundreds of years after David, and acknowledges that everything that savours at all either of the supernatural or romantic must have been introduced into it in the days of the Jewish kings, we are but strengthened in our conviction that the easiest explanation of these wonderful tales is that fact which is much stranger than fiction. No one in Homer, who was a later writer even than the scribes of the days of Hezekiah, which these writers have selected as the age when Hebrew genius developed, had any conception of such chivalry as that of the Jewish outlaw in the wilderness, when he cut off the skirt of his enemy's mantle and let the enemy himself go free—or when he penetrated into Saul's camp in the depths of night and brought away the spear that was planted by his bedside, but aimed no blow at himself lying there unprotected in his sleep. These are actions which would have become the blameless Bayard, which Sir Lancelot or Sir Galahad might have performed. But who should have suggested them to the Hebrew scribe, what could have made them possible to the exile of Judah in his hard struggle for life? This mystery is one which no learned savant pretends to explain; it is far more wonderful than any arithmetical discussion of the numbers of the Israelites or other such highly important question. That numerals should change and be altered in the process of time and the multitude of transcriptions is likely enough. But who put such a thought into the mind of a Hebrew writer before chivalry had any existence? All the learning in the world will not clear up this. Hebrew accents and Chaldean

idioms may occupy the learned philologist for ever if he will, but will never make him aware how it was that in this primitive age a story worthy of the most magnanimous Christian chivalry could find a place—or more wonderful still be invented, where no code of manners or of morals existed to make such an incident possible had it not been true.

We are all acquainted from our cradles with these twin tales. David, hunted from place to place, now driven from the city he had rescued, now from the woods and wild recesses of the desert, was lurking with a band of his followers in a deep cave where perhaps they were listening breathless to the crash of Saul's soldiers upon the rocks, and their stumbling progress over the tufts of bristling desert herbage and thickets of thorny growth: when lo! Saul stood in the entrance of their cave alone. The men who crowded in those dark crevices pressed upon one another's shoulders to gaze, and with fierce whispers and gestures pushed forward David to seize the opportunity. Could it be more evident that the Lord had delivered his enemy into his hand? It must have required no small force to resist that fierce impulsion, even had no deliverance depended upon it. But David was incapable of taking his foe at a disadvantage, though it was not upon this ground that he held back: "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." But half for policy doubtless, half in poetic impulse, he cut the skirt of Saul's garment to prove what had been in his power. The king's train we may suppose had scattered over the rocky hillside, clambering up its wild terraces as they could, thinking their master in no danger; and when Saul resumed his way he was still virtually alone. David followed him out of the cave with the bit of stuff

in his hand. He called after Saul and stood face to face with him, man to man: and few interviews more affecting were ever recorded: "I have not sinned against thee. Why huntest thou my soul to take it?" he pleaded. "Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand. The Lord judge between me and thee and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee." Who taught the primeval outlaw that noble appeal to the better nature of the enemy whom David had never been able to learn how to hate, notwithstanding all his cruelty? And Saul, a man of swiftly changing moods, of quick perceptions, with a strain of wild generosity too in the heart which was subject to the sway of passions so dark, and that despair which is so often poisonous in the depth of its gloom—was not unresponsive to the appeal. "Is this thy voice, my son David?" he cries, penetrated to the heart.

The other scene is still more picturesque. Again there is treachery at work but with more excuse than that of the men of Keilah. No doubt David and his six hundred were uneasy neighbours for the Ziphites, and held them in perpetual alarm, and it was little wonder that they should send word to the king, who was known to desire nothing so much as the capture of the son of Jesse, that the outlaw was there, lurking among the hills, and with little possibility of escape were the pursuing force sufficiently strong. The news was brought to David, we may be sure, as soon as the tents were pitched upon the opposite slopes whence Saul intended to encircle and crush his victim. The wanderer

looked out from the heights upon the encampment below and saw the place where Saul lay with Abner his general close by. "Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp?" he asked after long gazing at the spot where his pursuers lay. Abishai, his sister's son, was the man who offered himself for that dangerous service, and when the night came, the two Eastern heroes, lightly clad, and softly shod, descended noiseless into the midst of the slumbering multitude. Again we are reminded of the ages of chivalry, of the minstrels' tales, and romance of modern thought. The two gliding figures reached the very centre of the encampment where the king lay, with his spear stuck in the ground within reach of the piled mats or carpets which formed his bed. Once more Abishai whispered that the moment had come, that the Lord had delivered their enemy into their hand. "Let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once," said the fierce murmur in David's ear, "and I will not smite the second time" —grim promise which the son of Zeruiah would not have failed to redeem. But no such thought was in the mind of the noble outlaw. There is in the utterances of David at these moments a strain of emotion which is very remarkable. One would say as of a man in whose heart there was still a great yearning of affection for that doomed king, of whom he now knew that he was, yet never desired to be, the most dangerous rival—the king who was so capable of being touched by the truth, yet so incapable of continuing in it, or departing from the rage of jealous fear and certainty of doom that was in his heart. It is still more remarkable to see how that certainty had become by this time the acknowledged feeling of all who were most closely concerned. Not a word of it comes from the lips of David, but the others do not hide their conviction. "Behold I know well that

thou shalt surely be king," says Saul himself after the encounter in the cave; and even at an earlier date Jonathan had expressed the same conviction. They were fighting, as they knew, a lost battle: it was David finally to whom all the honour, all the success must come; and this conviction in Saul's mind, fiercely resisted no doubt with wild outbursts of fury and despair, gave bitterness and passion to all his actions. When Abigail came upon her mission to David she expressed the same sentiment, which shows that it had already affected the popular mind, "When the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel." It would seem that no one but David himself had any doubt that the outlaw who went in daily danger of his life pursued from wilderness to wilderness, was the future King of Israel—and least of all the family so closely connected with him, between whom and himself there were such ties of love and hatred, the household of the king whom he was to supplant and to succeed.

Still more like a romance of the days of chivalry was the action of David after that night visit to the camp of Saul. When the morning broke, and they had stolen their way through the sleepers eluding any watch that might have been set, or careless sentinel—David and his attendant stood upon the hillside and called to the astonished host below. It was Abner whom he called, the commander, upbraiding him with the inefficient watch he had kept. "Art not thou a valiant man? And who is like to thee in Israel?" he cries, "Wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? For there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord." "One of the people!" There is a careless pride in the phrase which bears no resemblance to the pride that apes humility. David would not say that it was himself:

the greater shame to the ineffectual guard that it was one of the people, any man so to speak, who had been able to thread the sleeping ranks and carry off the king's spear. Saul was a man of unusual stature, and no doubt his spear was known among the people like that of Goliath, "like a weaver's beam." And to see it, with its glittering blade shining in the morning sun on the other side of the ravine in the hand of the poet-orator, whose indignant yet tender remonstrance came pealing over those depths, must have affected powerfully the listening and eager host, as it affected the unhappy king himself, in whom once more his better nature burst forth. But Saul's moods of compunction were evanescent, and it was his only policy to destroy David if that might be. The knot was cut in this instance by the sudden alarm of a Philistine invasion: Saul was compelled to turn back from his private vengeance to meet the public foe.

But it would seem that but for this unexpected diversion the outlaws surrounded in the wilderness had little prospect of escape before them. And David having made that last attempt to move the heart of his pursuer, fell himself under the heaviness of despair. He had escaped for this time, but one day or other in face of such a desperate and ceaseless pursuit he must perish by the hand of Saul. To what end should he struggle further? Deeper and deeper had he burrowed in those desolate places, in the wildest caverns, the most dreary deserts, even down to the arid shores of the Salt Sea, that region accursed, with all its dismal memories. It must have given an additional pang to his warlike soul to know that the very necessity which saved him and called off his pursuers was one in which, had things been otherwise, he himself would have been the champion, the leader sent against the Philistines. Once more we may

find a parallel to David's case in that of a Scots noble in disgrace betaking himself with shame and wrath to the protection of the English, with whom he had been in warfare all his life. In the same way the Douglas banished sought refuge in England, nay even a Stuart, Alexander of Albany, who was persecuted by his brother James III. on warrant no greater than that of Saul, followed the same example: both, however, falling into the guilt of plots against their native kingdom from which David kept himself free.

The story of David is indeed that of a blameless knight, a cavalier *sans peur et sans reproche* up to this time. He had done all in honour from the first moment of his appearance, putting forth no pretensions, behaving himself with all the grace of a perfect hero. What little transactions there may have been in the wilderness with those six hundred and their train of women and children to provide for, there is no record; but at all events he would seem to have been courteous and conciliatory even to those upon whom he levied supplies, as in the case of Nabal, where there is an ingratiating tone of friendliness and modesty in the first demand, remarkable in the case of a brigand chief, as David has constantly been called, who was so able to take without apology what he desired. Blackmail, to be sure, is an ugly word: but the most carefully constructed system of taxes is in reality nothing but blackmail, the payment of that protection which an established government gives, and which it has no moral right to exact except on that supreme and universally acknowledged argument. The days of David were very primitive days, and Saul's authority or power of protection as king must have been limited: so that the outlaw who was, according to Nabal's herdsmen, "a wall to us both by day and by night," was in reality the only representative of a protecting government to those

defenceless people. Any defence of David, however, on this score is sophistry to us, and would have been the most unnecessary thing in the world to him.

At all events the severest critic can find little else to reproach David with in this period of his career. He was forced into—not rebellion, for no act against Saul's authority is ever suggested—but into a wild and feudatory life by incessant pursuit and persecution; yet he raised no hostile banner, put forth no pretensions to the crown. And when in despair and sickness of heart he turned away and directed his steps once more to the Philistine court to seek the protection of the enemies of Israel, it was not like Coriolanus to ruin Rome, nor like Albany to sign secret treaties against the independence of his country, but only to shelter himself from a ceaseless pursuit, and to give rest to the land harassed by that perpetual search and invasion.

And while he thus found his only home in those caves and secret solitudes the poet-wanderer poured forth in many a troubled strain the sorrows of his heart to God. So many of the critics as consent to his part in the Psalms at all, tell us that these are rough and untuneable, the most primitive accents of poetry (perhaps as Milton in his learned superiority spoke of the immortal diction of Shakespeare as "wood-notes wild"); but to the multitudes who have used for thousands of years those very words of David to express their own sorrow and pain, and have found no such perfect utterance in all the system of modern hymns and canticles, the criticism means little. It must be amazing to the musician who knows the elaborate structure of his own art, to see how easily proficiency in that science, so much less simple than poetry, is attributed to the primitive singer. The music to which these psalms were set in after years, or to which, who can tell, David himself simply adapted them as he sat in the mouth of his cave,

or at the door of his tent in the clear Eastern nights, in those intervals of peace when the pursuers were not at his heels, was probably a mere chant with cadences, that wild natural strain nothing in itself but an aid to the utterance of the poem—the minstrel's story, or the mourner's lament, or the psalm of triumph and joy—which is the beginning of all primitive music. And such as the following were the songs of the desert, the cry of the exile and outlaw—

"O Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust:
Save me from all them that persecute me;
Deliver me: lest he tear my soul like a lion,
Rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

"O Lord my God, if I have done this;
If there be iniquity in my hands;
If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me;
(Yea, rather I have delivered him
That without cause was my enemy:)
Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it;
Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,
And lay mine honour in the dust.

"Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger, against the rage of mine enemies:
Awake for me, Thou who hast decreed justice.
So shall the congregation of the people compass Thee about:
For their sakes return Thou on high.

"The Lord shall judge the people:
Judge Thou me, O Lord, according to my righteousness,
And according to the integrity that is in me.
Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end;
Establish Thou the just:
For the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins.

"My defence is of God,
Who saveth the upright in heart.
God is a righteous Judge;
He showeth His indignation every day.
If (the wicked) be turned not, He will whet His sword;
He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.
He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death;
His arrows are as flame against the persecutors.
Behold, the wicked travaileth with iniquity;

He hath conceived mischief,
And brought forth falsehood.
He made a pit, and digged it,
And is fallen into the ditch which he hath made.
For his mischief shall return upon himself,
And his violent dealing upon his own head.

"I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness:
I will sing praise unto the name of the Lord most high."[1]

Another psalm which breathes the same spirit of almost despair, rising by the healing action of poetic utterance and deep reflection upon the grace of God into confidence and hope, we have already identified with that agonising pause in David's life when he waited in hiding for Jonathan's message. Again, and it might well be after those encounters with Saul when he had hoped by generosity and affection to touch his pursuer's heart, he breathes forth that appeal of the sufferer so often repeated through the ages: "How long, O Lord, how long?"

"How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?
How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
While sorrow is in my heart daily?
How long shall mine enemies be exalted over me?

"Consider and hear me, O Lord my God:
Lighten mine eyes,
Lest I sleep the sleep of death;
Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;
And those that trouble me
Rejoice when I am moved.

"But I have trusted in Thy mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.
I will sing unto the Lord,
For He hath dealt bountifully with me."

[1] One or two very slight deviations from the authorised version of the Psalms are taken from the critical exposition of Messrs. Jennings and Lowe.

It is, as has been already remarked, a commonplace to say—what every devout reader must have felt in personal use of the Psalms—how often the denunciations of the enemies of the writer come in with a jarring discord into the prayers and vows of the supplicant: yet so far as David personally is concerned there is not only much excuse, but his force of malediction is in reality much less than is supposed. Doeg the Edomite, who betrayed the fact of his brief passage through Nob, and the kind offices of the unfortunate priest, thus bringing about the massacre of that priest and all his family, was, for instance, a ruffian who would have had short shift in any community: while on the other hand it is to be remarked that David's prayers for vengeance are limited to the desire that his enemies should fall into the net which they have laid for him, and the pit they have digged. That their craft and evil devices should fall back upon themselves, is, in the age when an eye was to be for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, a very moderate denunciation. It is remarkable indeed that to Saul himself David never from beginning to end shows any bitterness, and that he is always fully capable of appreciating the honesty and valour of such a character as Abner, with whom he has no quarrel. Curious too we must add again is the absolute want of partisanship in the record. Saul with all his faults never loses our pity, almost it may be said even at his worst moments our affection. Abner is fully recognised in his manly simplicity, made vivid to us by a few lines of portraiture. One might be warranted in saying that no such impartial history exists, and that never in any record, especially of civil war and much personal conflict, did the opponents of the eventually successful side get so fully their due.

The second visit of David to the Philistine king was very unlike the first. It was indeed equally the move-

ment of despair which led him: but he was no longer a solitary and powerless man, whose life might have been at any moment the forfeit of his temerity in thus venturing into the stronghold of his enemies: but at the head of a valiant and desperate band, certain to have sold their lives dearly if hospitality had been refused them. It is clear, as has been already said, that neither at this time nor at any other during Saul's lifetime had David any thought of an avowed and formalised rebellion. He was not a rival candidate for the throne: nor was he even stung by continual and unceasing pursuit to set up any rebel standard. The necessities of existence drove him to the ordinary predatory life of a desert chief, which was not then or for many centuries after a reproach to any man. It is a little difficult to understand how in Adullam or the other desert places where he afterwards found refuge, there could have been sufficient booty procurable to maintain such a body of men. Rich caravans from Egypt or from Tyre, wealthy travellers from south to north or north to south, the manufacturers of Damascus, or the traders from the already noted cities of the coast would scarcely have passed that way: and it is little likely that the agriculturists or pastoral farmers around, whom he rather protected (as in the case of Nabal) than assailed, could have furnished enough had they been devoured altogether, for such a band—though it is difficult to imagine any other means of support which they could have had. But if they plied the outlaw's usual trade there is not the slightest evidence that they had ever thought of raising the banner of King David in opposition to King Saul, nor did the wanderer ever attempt to meet in battle the armies brought against him, notwithstanding the fact that a number of the greatest warriors of Israel had followed him into the wilderness. Had the six hundred made a descent from

their vantage ground on the hill, upon that sleeping host through which David threaded his way to the very tent of the king, who could doubt that the result would have been most disastrous for Saul and his careless followers? But no such idea ever seems to have entered his mind.

The cynical reader may say that the strength was too certainly on Saul's side to make any such attempt possible: but that consideration has never restrained any rebel of David's prestige and importance, nor probably could any ordinary levy of three or four times their number have stood before these tried and renowned warriors led by such a chief. It is most singular and remarkable that no project of resistance ever seems to have been considered. David and his men disappeared into the fastnesses which they knew so well, when they were pushed by their pursuers; twice, as we have seen, he attempted to overcome the strong hostility against him by parley and the evidences of his own veneration for the Lord's anointed. But when neither continual failure, nor those signs of a magnanimity which Saul had the heart to appreciate though they made no permanent difference in his actions, failed to cut short the pursuit, the harassed outlaw could hold out no longer. "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand." This step, doubtful as it may appear to have been, as adopted by a Hebrew patriot, was the dictate of necessity no less than of a weary despair: and it seems to have been successful in its immediate object. Perhaps Saul felt that the rival whom he so feared had put himself at a disadvantage in thus seeking the protection of the common enemy: just as the Scots in their early history

found it difficult to pardon a Scottish knight who had accepted the protection of England. And the result was that the pursuit was stopped, and David was left alone in his exile. It was no doubt an advantage also to the harassed country, continually troubled by a kind of civil war, though the action was all on one side.

The career of David in the land of the Philistines was a strange one. It may well be imagined that Achish, a king of a traditionary race, possessing all the civilisation of the time, and much more advanced than the Israelites who were still only a few generations out of the desert, should have had no desire to keep these six hundred wild men out of the wilderness with their multitudinous train of women and children, about him in his capital. But he never seems to have hesitated about receiving them, and the friendship and society of the wandering paladin would appear to have been delightful to him as to almost all whom David encountered. Uniting policy with hospitality, however, Achish speedily allotted to his formidable visitors the city of Ziklag, by what summary process of turning out its previous inhabitants, or forcing this tremendous invasion of guests upon them, we have nothing to show. Let us hope that Ziklag had been previously devastated by some pest, or emptied of its people by some petty war, neither of these unlikely events. It would seem probable indeed by the fact that Ziklag continued to be the property of the kings of Judah, that it was given over entirely as a gift to David. It cannot be said that he behaved so nobly in respect to Achish as he had done to Saul. But here again the record is wholly impartial, making no attempt to put any gloss upon his actions. He was no sooner settled in Ziklag than, necessities of existence no doubt coming in, he made a raid against the southern people between Philistia and the land of Egypt, allies or tributaries of

his protector "the Geshurites, the Gezrites and the Amalekites," all, it must be allowed, ancient enemies of Israel, and accordingly fair prey to a Hebrew warrior—destroying both cities and people and carrying away all their substance. That this was recognised as his means of living is evident from the highly characteristic question, put in all civility and friendliness by Achish, over whom the Hebrew chief had exercised his usual charm. "Whither have ye made a raid to-day?" said this indulgent monarch. The magnanimous David did not hesitate to tell a politic lie. He pretended that his expedition had been against the south of Judah. It was much as if a Scots knight under hiding in England had made his foray against some peaceful lowland dale on the south side of the border, but explained to the English authorities that it was from Liddesdale that he had brought those herds of lowing cattle. In both cases the reason would have satisfied his own conscience that his raid was justifiable by the fact that these were the enemies of his own country whom he had despoiled, whatever might have been its effect upon his hosts. David went a step farther with true Oriental cruelty and completeness. He "saved neither man nor woman alive, lest they should tell on us saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines." Achish fell completely into the trap. He believed that the raid had really been made upon David's own race, and that "He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever." To offer any excuses for David is no more the part of this writing than of the strictly impartial and just record. His name must bear this reproach as it has other and still more grievous reproaches to bear.

After, however, he had lived more than a year in Zik-

lag, doubtless employing himself in various expeditions of the kind above recorded, and settling himself more and more comfortably in his newly-acquired residence, like an Italian captain of the Middle Ages, a Sforza or a Colleoni, there came an alarming crisis in this lawless yet carefully ordered life. War was again declared between the Philistines and Saul, and there was a general gathering of the forces of the plains against those of the mountains. Here was a test which David perhaps had not foreseen in the first impulse of his despair, that he should be called upon to join the army of his protector against his own people. It was no doubt a bitter moment; but the severe and self-restrained record gives us no glimpse into the musings of the exile, torn in two as he must have been by the cruel situation, which was terrible to every sentiment as well as destructive to every ambitious desire or hope for the future: for how could Israel ever forgive the sight of her own son fighting against her in the ranks of her bitterest enemies? Yet how could he desert the friend who had sheltered him in his worst need? The mediæval captain to whom we have compared him turned his arms gaily from one side to another according to the remuneration offered him. But David was no mercenary, and as yet had done nothing, except the mere fact of living among the Philistines, contrary to his allegiance.

The moment of trial, however, had now come. "Know thou assuredly," said Achish, calling his guest to him, "that thou shalt go up to battle with me, thou and thy men." There is something authoritative, even threatening in this intimation. And whether the reply of David was intended for an equivocation or not it is difficult to tell. "Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do." Did he mean to be "falsely true" to Achish as the king understood him, or did he intend a treachery

which the stronger ties of patriotism and kindred might have justified to himself? A more exciting moral crisis could not be. But we shall never know how it would have ended: whether faith unfaithful, and the honour of a fugitive so deeply indebted to his protector, or natural feeling and all the strong inducements of ambition and policy would have carried the day. Fortunately for David the Philistine leaders here interfered. There were among them no doubt many whose relations and friends had fallen by David's hand, many who had fled before his hot pursuit after that battle in Ephes-dammim, and others not identified in history—many too who were jealous of his favour with Achish and who had no faith in the truth or fidelity of an Israelite. When these leaders found that David and his men were in the contingent which Achish himself led to the rallying-point, they turned upon the king with remonstrances which show how little superiority the fact of kingship gave among those independent captains. "What do these Hebrews here?" they asked fiercely. Achish was plausible and conciliatory in his explanation. "Is not this David, which has been with me three years and I have found no fault in him?" Is not this David! Well did they remember who this David was, the man of whom the Hebrew women had sung, "one to another in dances, saying, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." "Make this fellow go back," they cried with one voice, not without an angry jibe at the partiality of Achish. "Let him return, that he may go back to his place which thou hast appointed him: and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he may be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself to his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?"

It is easy to imagine with what a sensation of relief

David must have listened to the echoes of this controversy, which no doubt had flown through all the camp as every new detachment arrived, and soon penetrated to where the Hebrews—heavy and sad—pitched their tents among the alien host. "Their honour rooted in dishonour stood:" every claim of gratitude and loyalty bound them to the generous king: and yet when they saw before them the standard of their country, and recognised the ensigns, each man of his tribe, what pangs must have been in every heart! The rage of the Philistine leaders no doubt fell like balm from heaven upon David and his men. He made a little polite objection, a little remonstrance to his royal patron—"What have I done? What hast thou found in thy servant that I may not go up against the enemies of my lord the king?" But Achish was happily peremptory, and anxious, it would seem, to avert any possibility of collision. "As soon as ye be up early in the morning, and ye have light, depart," he said. One can imagine with what alacrity, with what thanksgiving to the God of Israel who thus prevented such a sin against Himself and His people, the hardy warriors sprang up in the dawning and vanished from the warlike scene. Their faith to Achish forbade them to draw sword for their brethren, and no doubt there were many anxious thoughts over the issue of that day to Israel, but at all events they were preserved from the horror of fighting against them, and on the enemies' side.

This providential deliverance was carried out and made still more emphatic by the next incident which occurred to David and his men: a terrible incident enough yet one which must have been always possible in their lives. They returned to Ziklag to find their town in ruins, smoke and flame still bursting from the roofs, the place deserted, not a woman nor a child about to

greet their return, and every sign of a successful raid such as those with which they were themselves familiar, not a living creature left in the desolate place to tell the tale. With the same measure with which they had meted out it was measured to them again: but perhaps that is not a reflection which consoles any one, especially not a band of men, returning to find their homes empty and everything belonging to them destroyed or carried away. In the first moment of anguish and horror even his brothers-in-arms turned upon David. There was wild talk among the men of stoning him in the rage of their desolation, as the cause of this trouble: which of course was as foolish as it was unjust, since it was David to whom they owed their homes and possessions, and he was himself as great a sufferer as any. It would seem, however, that he soon found means of quieting these murmurs and of deciding what course to pursue. There must have been some spectator, some old man, or useless person hidden among the ruins who stole forth at sight of the returning band, and informed them that it was the Amalekites, one of whose cities David had treated so cruelly, who had taken this vengeance, but who more merciful than David had killed nobody, so that there was still hope of recovering the captives. David put heart and courage into his men by consulting God, in the extraordinary way which it is so difficult to understand, by means of the ephod, and receiving a favourable answer, re-formed at once his weary followers and set out in pursuit. The men had been marching all day, and when they reached Ziklag were already exhausted with their journey; but the occasion was too urgent for rest. Two hundred of them, however, were so faint that they could not go far, and had to be left behind halfway while the others went on. The end was that the fierce and anxious pursuers came down upon their spoilers in the moment

of repose, when they had stopped for the night, and secure in the absence of all the warriors of the country and the impossibility of pursuit, had given themselves up to feasting and rejoicing. It was not only Ziklag that had been spoiled but the borders of Judah, and those of Philistia, both nations in preparation for the coming conflict having been compelled to leave their frontiers unguarded; and the night camp was surrounded by bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle, as well as by the unhappy groups of women and children huddled together, not knowing perhaps the moment when the caprice of their conquerors might inflict still greater misery. Upon them in their moment of relaxation the fierce Hebrews, full of the rage of exhaustion as well as revenge, fell like wolves upon sheep. They took them with the cup at their lips, with their arms laid aside: "they smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day." Four hundred "young men who rode upon camels" are said to have escaped. The numerals of the Old Testament are always confusing, and the whole strength of David's band was but four hundred. But such victories over overwhelming numbers are characteristic of primitive warfare, and the young men on the camels may have been some advanced guard, who believed all Judah to be upon them. At all events David's band recovered their wives and children, which was their first object, besides an immense spoil.

This may be said to have been the end of David's career as an outlaw. His conduct after this extraordinary victory was full of wisdom and policy. He not only ordained and settled as a law in Israel that the men who had been left behind should have their share in the spoil, but he sent portions of it to the cities of Judah in which he himself had found succour and refuge in his earlier wanderings, recalling himself thus to their recollection,

and proving how very differently he had been employed than in the army of the Philistines, where no doubt the rumour had already run that he was in arms against Israel. Much the reverse! pursuing the Amalekites in a totally different direction, avenging his own quarrel and those of his compatriots, recovering the spoil which he thus generously shared with all his friends. The generosity and chivalry of David's character, so unexampled in his time, need not make us overlook those qualities of policy and astute calculation in which he was likewise strong. He was not a knight of romance alone, though he was so in a manner unknown to any other primitive literature of any nation—but at the same time he was a far-seeing and clear-headed Oriental chief, aware of a great future before him, and with no mind to neglect any just means of conciliating the popular favour. That he should have been able to turn that decisive moment when fate seemed against him, when it seemed all but certain that he must compromise himself for ever with Israel by fighting on the side of her enemies, into a triumphant vindication of his patriotism and unfailing sympathy for his country is the most wonderful instance of the way in which fact itself, and the contrarieties of human sentiment, fight for the man who knows how to use them. Had the Philistine lords been wise like David they would have forced him into that self-committal instead of affording him the means of turning the situation to his advantage in every way. The very Amalekites helped him in that futile raid of theirs, which for the first moment looked like the overturn of his fortunes and happiness.

He was still in the flush of his triumph dividing his spoil, sending out his presents here and there, perhaps in his excitement almost forgetting the great battle that had been raging on the plains, when a fugitive with

all the signs of woe upon him, his garments rent and earth upon his head, ostentatious in his show of mourning, arrived with news of the fight. The Israelites had been beaten; they had been driven back dispersed and flying before the Philistines, and Saul and Jonathan were both killed. It was not a Hebrew but an Amalekite who brought the news, a man with no natural occasion for such lamentation, whose attempt to curry favour with himself was evidently more clear to David than his sorrow for the calamity. And when he proceeded to tell a fabulous story of how it was he who had killed Saul at the prayer of the defeated king "because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen"—evidently with a confident hope that he was thus recommending himself to the highest favour—David made short work of the braggart who deserved his fate. It was policy, it may be said, thus to give the clearest proof that these news were no joyful news to the exile. But it is fully consistent with all we know of David to believe, that the rage of sudden grief which is not less bitter perhaps but rather worse, from the fact of separation and grievance between us and those we mourn, was not less the motive of this act than of the song of sorrow, the beautiful elegy that burst from his full heart. There is a curious touch of realism in the interpolation "also he bade them teach the children of Israel the use of the bow,"[1] which is put in at the beginning of this song: "for Saul had been sore wounded by the archers" in the course of the battle, before in

[1] This interpolation, quoted from the book of Jasher, is the foundation upon which M. Renan founds his statement that David wrote no Psalms, but only an occasional "copy of verses" on public subjects. Another very usual argument that the supposed Psalms of David are impossible to be his as expressing sentiments much more elevated than was known in his time, could scarcely have a stronger contradiction than this, one of the most beautiful poems in any language.

his misery and downfall he fell upon his sword. It recalls the fervour with which the first James of Scotland pursued the same exercise, apparently without effect in either case. But the wonderful song of both national and personal sorrow, the lament of Israel at once and of David, whose affections had never been altogether alienated from Saul, the first patron of his youth, by any intervening events, and who loved Jonathan as a brother: is one of those immortal songs which to all nations and in all languages become the utterance of the heart.

"How are the mighty fallen!
The beauty of Israel
Is slain upon thy high places.

"Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

"Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew,
Neither rain, upon you,
Nor fields of offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty is cast away,
The shield of Saul,
As though he had not been anointed with oil.

"From the blood of the slain,
From the strength of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
The sword of Saul
Returned not empty.

"Saul and Jonathan
Were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death
They were not divided:
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.

"Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you with scarlet,
Who put on ornaments of gold
Upon your apparel.

"How are the mighty fallen
In the midst of the battle!

"O Jonathan,
Thou wast slain in thy high places.
I am distressed for thee,
My brother Jonathan:

"Very pleasant hast thou been to me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.

"How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!"

Thus the first portion of the life of David, his probation and training, came to an end, in great calamity and confusion and national overflow. Nothing could have ended more disastrously to the Hebrews than that first essay at the kingship which they had so much desired. It remained yet to be seen whether the house of Saul could make any head among the shattered people, or what new settlement of the affairs and constitution of Israel was in the hand of Providence.

CHAPTER III.

THE KING OF ISRAEL.

THE romance of David's life is so full of attraction that we are a long time arriving at Jerusalem, which is the special aim of this narrative. We will not therefore linger upon the intermediate steps, or the confused period which elapsed before his full recognition as King of Israel. It was only after receiving the Divine command that he left Ziklag and adventured himself in Hebron, in the southern part of Judah, as far removed as the boundaries of the tribe permitted from the home of Saul: which had always been an important place, the ancient city of Abraham, still deeply venerated as such even in the present day. Here he settled with a certain tentative air, his men scattering themselves among the villages, many, no doubt, finding after all their wanderings their native homes again. His tribe which, no doubt, had followed his erratic career with interest, and heard a thousand reports and half-fabulous tales of his prowess, besides the still more attaching influence of those songs in the wilderness, which had flown from lip to lip as oral literature does everywhere, but nowhere so surely as in the East—must by this time have felt that its own power and greatness as the first of the tribes was bound up with his fame. And they lost no time in taking the bold step, dangerous if Saul's family had been able to

retain their power, of anointing David king. One of his first acts was to reward and promise special protection to the men of Jabesh-Gilead who had recovered Saul's remains from the Philistines and given them honourable burial; and no doubt the strains of the funeral song were sung over the whole country at once in celebration of the dead and honour to the living. But David had yet many difficulties before him ere his position was established. These difficulties were not only with his enemies but among his friends and defenders; for it is only now that another figure, more rugged and far less attractive than David, but full of character and power, a strong shrewd Hebrew without embellishment or grace, apt to do whatever commended itself to his powerful practical sense without favour or scruple, the bold and ready Joab, appears fully on the scene. His two brothers Abishai and Asahel, shadows of this strong primitive figure always accompanying him, add to his terrible presence an additional power. They would seem to have moved and fought and thought together, a sort of threefold champion, devoted to the interests of their kinsman which were their own, but by no means inclined to consider those delicacies of feeling, those scruples of sentiment which distinguished David, nor capable of understanding the chivalrous side of his character. Not for the sons of Zeruiah was that mission of pure romance, like the finest inspiration of the Middle Ages, totally unlike anything in Greek or Roman story, on which the three mighty men of David's band fought their way through the Philistines to bring their chief a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem. Joab was by far too hard-headed, too practical a man to have lent himself to such an enterprise; one can almost imagine the snort of indignant scorn with which he would watch the three, all breathless from the struggle bringing that precious

draught to the tent door where their leader sat. What a waste of strength and effort he must have thought it! but when the question was one of hard fighting and the responsibilities of a great command, Joab and his attendant brothers were never at fault.

The first great event in David's reign was the battle between the supporters of Saul's family under his great general Abner, and the host of Judah and servants of David under Joab. Abner, though he occupies but a small place in the record, is so set before us as to acquire all our sympathies. It would be hard to say precisely why this is, for we have few details of this manly and noble personage and can scarcely give a reason for the attraction we feel towards him. His was all the real strength that belonged to the impoverished house of Saul shorn of its natural leaders, the heir as well as the head of the race. Abner it was who set up the feeble son that remained upon an insecure throne, and gathering all the forces at his command sought the test of battle without delay, hoping no doubt to crush the rival of his master at a blow. The fight took place at Gibeon, though it would seem to have been unlike Joab's prudence to allow himself to be drawn so far from home, and to risk the newly established kingdom of David on such a hazard. Once more the account of the battle might have come out of Froissart. The armies placed themselves, "sat down," one on each side of the pool of Gibeon. "Let the young men now arise and play before us," said Abner. "Let them arise," said Joab. Was this tragic play, this ordeal of battle—twelve champions of Benjamin against twelve of Judah, meeting between the two watching armies—a test perhaps of eventual success, a rehearsal of the fight?

> "Who spills the foremost foeman's life
> His party conquers in the strife."

We are not told what was the issue of that preliminary struggle—though no doubt it was mutual slaughter: but in the end Abner was beaten and his followers broken and dispersed, though not without a melancholy incident to spoil the triumph of the victors. The youngest of the three brothers, Asahel, was "as light of foot as a wild roe," and as Abner retreated pursued him, no doubt fired by the thought of distinguishing himself and emulating the exploits of his uncle David in his youth. Abner turned to warn the hot-headed lad again and again, bidding him seek a more fit antagonist, almost imploring him to save himself. But when such arguments proved unavailing and there was no alternative but to kill or be killed, the regretful general struck the youth with "the hinder end of his spear," hoping perhaps to disable without killing him. When the other pursuers came to that barrier on their way, the body of the swift-footed young warrior lying across the path, they stood still and went no farther, though Joab seems to have sounded the bugle of recall without knowing what fatal object it was which had checked the pursuit. That the fierce and downright Joab would take the first opportunity of avenging his brother was of course certain—but the peremptory roughness with which he questioned David when Abner, offended by Ishbosheth, his own mock king, came to offer his allegiance, shows with what red-hot material David had to deal. "Why is it that thou hast sent him away? is he quite gone?" cried the furious captain taking his own measures with all the swiftness of an avenger to intercept and call back the visitor. When Abner returned unsuspecting, believing himself to be recalled by David, Joab met him in the gate of Hebron with a treacherous aspect of kindness which could scarcely, however, deceive a man as well acquainted with the usages of the time as himself, and taking him aside "to

speak with him quietly" killed him there. According to the morals of his age he had a right thus to avenge his brother; but it was a tragic incident with which to begin a reign. There was a universal mourning over the great general, who was honoured even by his adversaries: and some three thousand years after the people wept for Abner we, too, who read the story acknowledge a remorseful regret for the great career cut short, the noble knight laid low. David's wail over him is not so fine, nor so clear as his lament for Saul, being dictated by no such intimate connection. The untoward event, however, called forth indignation as well as regret.

> "Died Abner as a fool dieth?
> Thy hands were not bound,
> Nor thy feet put into fetters:
> As a man falleth before wicked men,
> So fellest thou."

Perhaps this was a little hard upon Joab, to whom David was so deeply indebted in after years, and who stood by him doggedly through many troubles, without ever awakening that sympathy in his poetic nature which went out so warmly towards Jonathan, and felt so deeply the charm of Abner's character. The sons of Zeruiah were faithful servants to their kinsman, yet hard task-masters too.

There is nothing said in sacred history of the plans that matured in the mind of David while those years were passing in which no great event occurred. He was seven years in Hebron, reigning over his tribe and its dependents, no doubt doing much, both in the subjugation of foes around, and in the ordering of laws and living within; but it would appear, except for that one eventful battle which made a blood feud between Joab and Abner, and decided the fate of the latter, taking no distinct step to procure for himself the entire sover-

HEBRON.

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eignty of the nation, or to disturb the feeble sway of Ishbosheth in the midland tract of Palestine which recognised his authority: notwithstanding the constant muttering of hostilities, never brought to any decisive battle, which existed between them. In any case it is apparent that his views of kingship were very different from those elementary views of Saul who was more the champion of Israel than its monarch, and had not changed his residence nor probably much modified his living on account of that imperfectly comprehended charge. The kings of the surrounding nations were kings of cities, of small subdivisions of the country, without importance enough to favour any lofty view of the royal office. It was a king to go out at their head in battle, to give coherence to their host, which Israel had asked when the idea first occurred to them. The King of Philistia even, lord of the plain and sea-coast, though wealthier and stronger, and no doubt much more advanced in civilisation than the king of a mountain-tribe, must yet have held a petty empire in comparison with that headship of a nation, and sway from Dan to Beersheba of which David dreamed. Even that was a little kingdom enough in any modern sense of the word. If the modes of communication of our present time were ever introduced into Palestine, from Dan to Beersheba would scarcely be a day's journey: yet when compared with the kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon, for instance, the dominion over the Hebrews must have appeared a mighty empire. David would seem to have been the first since Moses who had thought upon that peculiar people as an indivisible race: and it would appear that among his other qualities he knew how to wait. He looked on while Ishbosheth alienated Abner: and even when the hopes of that general's action in his own favour were closed by his sudden death, would seem to have taken no

steps to precipitate matters, but to have kept in full fidelity his promise to Saul not to cut off his house. In the meantime, however, it is impossible to doubt that his mind was full of thought and deliberation over the high part which he had yet to play and the best means of consolidating and establishing on the soundest foundations that kingdom which he foresaw.

Hebron was at the extreme end of the territory of Judah, much less suited than Gibeah had been for a capital. With our present ideas it would have seemed to us very natural that the historian should have spoken here of the sacred recollections of Mount Moriah, and of that great act of Abraham which had made it so memorable. To the Jew of later times, as well as to the Christian, and to the Mohammedan, that association would assuredly have occurred, and have been stated, as an important motive in the choice of Jebus for the future capital; but ancient tradition is by no means clear upon the fact, and the more ancient writer occupies himself with that alone and leaves the motives to evidence themselves. The city of the Jebusites had other recommendations. Its position was strong and central. The mountains encompassed it about like a natural guard; towards Philistia, for example, on the south and west it was defended by a series of rocky defiles, where a few men could have held an army at bay, and though these natural fortifications were less towards the north, that was precisely the point of the least importance when the tribes of Israel should have become one nation. In no other place were there the same advantages combined. It is curious to find that little Jebusite town, upon the scarps and shelves of its rocks, which had been counted from the age of the first incursion into Canaan among the cities allotted to Judah, still holding its fierce local independence five or six generations after: but it is evi-

dent that this occurred with no small number of the towns which had been given over on paper, as we should say, to the invading tribes, but which sloth or an unusually firm resistance, or the intervention of other motives of a more immediately urgent kind, had induced them to leave alone until a more convenient season.

It would almost appear as if David had made overtures to the inhabitants of this little city of some peaceful mode of acquiring possession, for we have their answer full of defiance and vain confidence. The message is confused in phraseology or has become so through defective translations. "Even the blind and the lame. He shall not come in," says the improved version on the margin of our Bibles: meaning no doubt a brag that the blind and the lame were strong enough to defend the rocky streets and steep ascent, against any troops that could be brought against them. David took up the jibe and called to his bravest captains to sweep away those blind and lame from his way, promising the post of commander of the army to him who did so. Those mighty men whose feats are recorded, the great Benaiah, the gallant Eleazer and the rest, David's favourite brothers-in-arms, were probably less skilful in this kind of service; and it was Joab, the dour and long-headed captain who won the day. The Jebusites, punished in their pride, were dislodged: and their city with its strong fort on the crest of the hill, its deep ravines below, the ledges of rock upon which its dwellings were perched, came out for ever from the obscurity of the ancient ages, and was made into, not the centre of Israel alone, but of a great undiscovered world of which its conquerors knew nothing—empires mighty and famous, races undeveloped or unborn, of which its little history, its insignificant forces, its strange people, should shape both the character and the fate.

Strange and wonderful destiny for a rude Eastern village wrapped round with the stony involutions of inhospitable hills! Athens was not as yet, far less any trace in the darkness of imperial Rome; nay, even Troy was not, nor any knowledge of its legendary struggles. It is the most bewildering thought when we attempt to look back, with all our modern theories of advancing progress and the development of the human race, and see amid the mists that covered all the rest of the world, that incident as vivid as if it had happened yesterday, far more clear than the events which are taking place, for instance, in India, notwithstanding all the electric telegraphs in the world. What was there in that little town among the hills that it should thus come in for ever into the moral landscape, be taken and retaken, ruined and burned, and raised again, century after century, age after age, without ever losing its supreme place in the thoughts, or its supreme influence over the destiny of the human race? How the Greek—invented, himself and all his works, centuries later—would have scorned, and the Roman laughed at, such a possibility! Yet there it stands having outlived and transformed them all, having printed its history upon the very souls of nations unborn, standing still among its ruins, waiting in silence for who knows what final demonstration? The scientific philosopher does well to keep his questioning, his jibes, his arguments for a miracle of a moment, for which the narrator had no leisure, and saw no necessity, to furnish proof. But he does not attempt to explain that miracle of the world, or demand of the great witness of all the ages how such a prodigy could be.

The writer may here confess, if a personal fancy probably fantastical enough, may be permitted, to a strong desire to communicate to the reader what it was an individual interest to attempt to trace, the original aspect

of this future capital, in one sense, of the world. Two hills, which are not much more mountains than are the seven hills of Rome, may be traced in profile from the higher ground on the other side of the valley of Himmon: The western hill rising to a point against the morning sun slopes downward, the modern wall marking the outline of the descent; then that line of defence rises to the summit of an angular platform on another eminence, square and bold, from whence the eastern slope falls abruptly, almost at one point a precipice, to the second valley below. Beyond this, inseparable, is the third hill of the little range, the Mount of Olives, now painfully crowned by a high white modern campanile which has no business there. We cannot dissociate this third eminence from the scene, though it is not Jerusalem, but only the everlasting attendant and spectator of Jerusalem. This is how they lie, the distinctive contour half buried in ruin, modern houses grown like weeds upon the buried masses of ancient houses, palaces and public places, which are only to be traced and followed in their original lines by excavations many feet deep under the modern surface. The little conjectural illustration here given shows what the first aspect of the little town must have been, and its transformation when the Temple was built. Much increased building and the filling up of all hollows, more or less, with ruin and the *débris* of the past, have made the aspect of the modern city that of an almost continuous slope from the height of Zion to the fortified wall of the Temple enclosure, the present Haram-esh-Sherif, from which the grass-clad declivity of Mount Moriah descends into the little glen of the Kedron, the valley of Jehoshaphat.

But when Joab's soldiers swarmed up these slopes from the deep valley now called the Tyropœon, the primitive buildings of the Jebusites were upon the

western hill alone. The little town lay, as the towns of Judah still lie, upon the side of the eminence, its little stronghold planted upon the height, its low houses clinging to the rocky sides, probably in many cases with a cave for the innermost room, and founded upon the ledges and layers of the living stone. They were so much higher it would seem, in civilisation then, than are the Arabs even of the present day who content themselves with mud huts plastered against the protecting slope—that

THE ANCIENT JEBUS. JERUSALEM OF DAVID'S TIME (CONJECTURAL).

their houses were of stone, a distinction due to their stony country which provided the materials of such solid construction. Across that deep low trench of a valley lay a green and rounded hill, through which broke points of rock, sloping softly upward on the side which was towards the town, but steep on the further declivity. We may be permitted to conjecture that its slopes were covered with corn, that a primitive farm spread out its long sheds and shelters for man and beast somewhere

upon the western slope looking towards Jerusalem, and that the farmer had placed his winnowing floor upon the height where all the winds would help him in his work, close by the rocky altar on which Abraham had made his sacrifice. There must have been so many rudely-built altars all about the country, that perhaps that traditional place was less remarked—or it might be that the farmer hoped it would bring him good fortune to thresh his corn near a sacred place. It must, however, again be noted that we know nothing of any ancient Jewish traditions as to this spot, which explains why it is that no mention of the sacred associations of Mount Moriah are found either in the history or in the many psalms and sacred songs which have to do with the Ark and Temple. Was it Mohammed in his anxious selection of novelties wherever he could find them to grace his new system, who first insisted upon the shrine of Abraham, and founded one of his holiest centres there —thus recalling to the Christian and even to the Jew its primeval consecration? But that is a question to which we cannot reply, the sole answer being that the mount upon which the Temple was built is called Mount Moriah, briefly and without any reference to its sanctity, in the description of the Temple of Solomon, but is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture except in the story of the sacrifice of Abraham, which was made in "the land of Moriah." We have, therefore, really no warrant for believing that the site of the new capital was chosen for any motive beyond that of its extreme convenience and almost unique adaptation to the desired use. That the adjoining hill should be the site of the great Temple, their pride and glory, the most magnificent work of their race, even it would appear splendid enough to be the glory of the time, though Tyre and Sidon and other accompanying nations abounded in luxuries and splen-

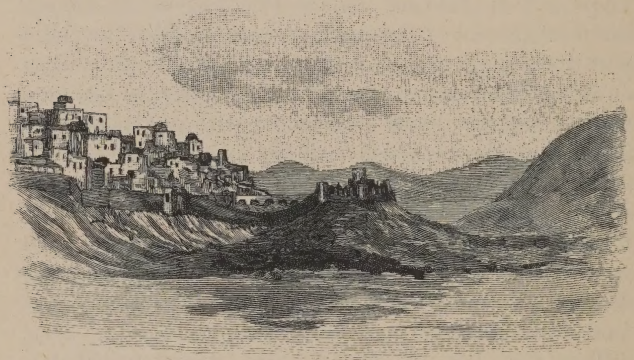
dours unknown to Israel, was evidently enough for the Israelites.

It was presumably soon after the murder of Ishbosheth, which he avenged summarily, as he had avenged Saul upon his self-alleged slayer, that David took the stronghold of the Jebusites and made it the seat of his power. It was within the borders of Benjamin, yet also within close reach of his brethren of Judah, and stood high upon a mount of vision where any proposed invasion could be guarded against. Possibly it was a conciliatory measure towards that tribe of Benjamin thus cast down from its high position as having given a king to Israel, to place the capital of the kingdom within its territory. David had no sooner taken possession of the place than he set to work to strengthen and beautify it, and above all to add to it the sanctity of all that was most sacred and full of hallowed associations in Israel. One of his earliest acts after the full establishment of his kingdom was to proclaim a day of high festival throughout the country which, bit by bit and tribe by tribe had acknowledged his sway, inviting all to come with him to bring up the Ark to the new centre of the national life. The Ark had been left at the village of Kirjath-Jearim on the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem, and close to the border of the Philistine country, when it was sent away in terror by the Philistines according to a previous narrative; and had remained there from the early days of Samuel till now, there being probably no pause long enough among the distractions of the time to suffer any ruler to think of its proper disposal, or place sufficiently strong and safe to place it permanently. It is probable enough that in the continual struggle for life, the recollection of that sacred emblem at once of their history and their faith, had faded in great measure out of the minds of the warring

race, whose mere physical necessities were so overwhelming, and who had to hold their own on every side against strong and watchful enemies. Nothing can be more deceptive than our calculations of policy as solely actuating such a movement. Had David not been moved by strong religious faith, and a boundless conviction that God was with him, and all things in the Divine hand, he never would have attained the position he now held; and it would be out of harmony with all that we know of him could we suppose that he was not himself the most fervent of the worshippers who filled the valley with their songs as they went along towards the village on its little elevation, where half forgotten in the long neglect, yet no doubt surrounded with a superstitious veneration, the ancient Ark of the desert, symbol of all the touching and wonderful story of Israel, the Ark which had passed before them through the wilderness, which had stood in the bed of Jordan when the people passed over, and accompanied them through all early dangers, remained where chance had carried it when sent forth from Philistia.

There would seem to have been no attempt made before to bring it into any consecrated place. The death of the priests, the destruction of the house of Eli, and universal distraction of the country, only half conquered at the best, full of enemies both within and without, had prevented any such effort. Various places of worship had set themselves up in various parts of the small area:—the tabernacle from which the Ark had been taken was at Gibeon:—at Gilgal, at Ramah, where Samuel lived in his patrimony, at Nob, where a whole Levitical family were destroyed by Saul, centres of worship had been established where some attempt to carry out the appointed ritual of worship was made, sacrifices were offered and the people "inquired at the Lord" in that

curious way which it is so hard to understand. But these were probably old shrines either adapted from the surrounding nations or instituted hastily to meet an everyday necessity. Kirjath-Jearim lies on a soft little knoll in the sunshine, its level lines of low houses surrounded by trees more luxuriant than are usual in Palestine, its position especially peaceful and smiling—though so near the border line, where the fierce Philistines must



THE JERUSALEM OF SOLOMON (CONJECTURAL).

have watched, one cannot but feel, those strange proceedings of the now conquering and prosperous Hebrews with much curiosity and some alarm. The procession must have surrounded the house of Abinadab which was "on the hill," with their music and their songs, waiting till the Ark was brought forth upon "a new cart" or car, the sons of Abinadab, one in front and one behind, conducting it. In that very valley the men of Bethshemesh had been punished for their vulgar and profane curiosity in opening and looking into the sacred treasures. But that was already an old story, and perhaps the popular

delight and excitement of the festival had made the crowd of followers almost forget what was the sacred occasion of their rejoicing: and by the time that the music and the rhythmic dance—those convolutions of almost solemn movement, which are so unlike anything that we know under the name of dancing—had reached the southern valley under the hill of Zion the wild excitement of the crowd had probably reached a climax. As we have no reason to suppose that natural causes are not used by Providence in all ages, it is legitimate, we think, to believe that the sudden death of Uzzah, who is said to have taken hold of the Ark to steady it, and thus called down upon him the wrath of the Lord—was due to the fatigue and excitement, the pressure of the crowd and the blazing of the sun: but the incident which was so emphatic an interruption of their mirth affected as nothing else could have done the imagination of the multitude, and recalled them to a sense of the sacredness of that symbol of God's presence which in the delight of their holiday they had been so ready to forget.

David was as much startled and terrified as the least instructed of his followers, and the terrible Ark was hurriedly dragged aside to the nearest farmsteading, where it was placed once more upon a threshing-floor and abandoned, the gay processionists dispersing to their homes in terror and dismay. "David was displeased," indignation mingling with alarm in his heart that God whom he had meant to honour should have "made a breach upon Uzzah." He called the fatal spot by the victim's name as he hurried away to hide his head in his castle on the hill. The impartial record has no indulgence for him, but puts down this sullen fit of anger with the same composure as his most pious acts. It is not a sentiment unknown to any of us, even the most devout; yet none of our historians now would venture to

say that we were "displeased" with what was recognised to be an act of God.

But this mood did not last. The king looked down from his fortress night and day upon the valley in which was hidden that sacred symbol: and as he came and went beheld on his way the empty tabernacle, the folds of the closed and vacant tent where he had meant to place the venerable token of God's presence with his people. It must have become a growing preoccupation, an eager longing and desire; indeed from this period the fixed idea of a House of God, more splendid than any tent or tabernacle, seems to have taken possession of David's mind. And then there came tales of how everything throve in the household of the man who had given to that sacred symbol the shelter of his roof, until by degrees the superstitious terrors wore off, the project was taken up again, and the wish of the king's heart was temporarily fulfilled. A feast more joyous still than the former which ended in so much trouble, made the shout of the newly named JERUSALEM echo to the skies, as all the splendour of Israel, everything that the warlike people possessed of glittering armour and waving ensigns, and many coloured robes, in the brilliancy yet harmony of hues which is natural to the East, poured down into the valley. David had taken advantage of the pause to secure that duly qualified and appointed persons should be there to convey the solemn burden to its place, and satisfy all the reverential laws which hedged about the sacred Ark of the testimony. The white-robed band of Levites in the midst arranged in their orders, singers and harpists, and all the fit attendants, with the priests at their head, must have made a wonderful shining centre to all the dark array of the mighty men of valour, the captains and champions, sunburnt with their life in the wilderness, who were inseparable from their leader, his

brothers-in-arms: and all the commoner train that crowded after them. We have no clear information where it was exactly that Obed-edom and his sons wielded their flails, while the winnowing winds through the open shed drove the useless chaff away. But no corn would be threshed or labour of the field go on on that great day. All the way up to the city gates through the ravine, all gay with many coloured crowds, what a sight to see that procession wind!—the first of many wonderful sights, the beginning of the link which bound the lesser hill to the loftier, the throne of national worship to the throne of the house of David. And as the choirs mounted towards the city, and the dark escort surrounded their white ranks, and the dancers marched and swayed in time, this was how the Levites without and within answered to each other and sang:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Who shall stand in His holy place?

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
Nor sworn deceitfully.

"He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

"This is the generation of them that seek Him,
Of them that seek Thy face,
Even of the house of Jacob.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Be ye lifted up, ye ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in.

"Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Lift them on high, ye ancient doors;
And the King of glory shall come in.

"Who is the King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory."

The curious story which follows shows us from some window in the wall a woman looking out upon the approaching procession, a woman sad at heart, torn from her ancient surroundings, brought back perhaps to a husband whom she had ceased to love, expected to wear a face of joy at the establishment of a new kingdom over the ruins of her father's house. Michal had loved David and saved his life in the early days of their devotion. But since then years of trouble and change had elapsed and other loves had taken the place of that romance. She had been restored not without reluctance on her part, forced perhaps by the extraordinary manners of the time, brought back with weeping to find other women in David's house and a crowd of children with whom she had nothing to do. Her heart, most like, was weary for an occasion to pour forth its bitterness. And when Saul's proud daughter saw the new king leading that dance, dressed in the scanty white tunic of a priest with his armour and his splendour laid by, all these accumulated griefs burst into that satire and ridicule which are the sharpest weapons of an angry woman. "How glorious was the King of Israel to-day! uncovering himself in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants:"—lowest vanity of all, to please the miserable women who were not worthy to look at a king, seeking their admiration, always the bitterest jibe a woman can find, "like one of the vain fellows." Truth to say the reader in these distant days is apt to agree with Michal in her scorn, knowing nothing of what these dances were, or of the conditions in which they were accounted a reverential service. David, who was at all times a man of fervent emotions, throwing himself into the act of the moment,

had no doubt been as superior to the vile motive which she attributed to him as are to this day many men on whom angry kinsfolk throw like aspersions—and answered indignantly: "I will yet be more vile than this, I will be base in my own sight," he cries. "It was before the Lord, who chose me before thy father, and before all his house." This altercation breaks painfully into the beautiful scene full of national devotion and sacred triumph, but embittered, as so often happens, by domestic discord. Michal had no child until the day of her death. She remained alone in the crowded household passionate and soured, she who had been the hero's first love. Let us hope she had not left children behind her who were not his in the distant Gibeah from whence she had been torn. But probably the old friends who looked on, distressed at this bitter breach, were helpless to intervene, knowing, as we say to-day, that on both sides there was a great deal to be said.

David had now attained the height of his glory, and the people of Israel had entered upon that period in which their greatness as an independent and united nation came to a climax. On every side enemies were subdued and neighbours conciliated, and the full force of the promises which gave to the children of Abraham if not full possession, at least supremacy, over the whole land of Canaan, began at last to come true. It was probably during one of the episodes of this interval of fighting, before the final conquest of the Philistines, when that strong and warlike people had spread themselves in swarming bands in the valley of Rephaim while David, probably unwilling to risk his newly acquired stronghold had gone down to "a hold"—perhaps the familiar ground of those old caves toward the east of Judah, with which his warriors were so well acquainted, or some strong natural fort thereabout where his head-

quarters could be established—that one of the most romantic incidents of his career took place. Day after day the battle raged, irregular, the reinforcements of the foe swarming to the front, with ever-renewed zeal. The whole country would seem to have been occupied by them; they were in force at Bethlehem, and had overrun all the fruitful fields and peaceful pastures of David's youth. It must have been at the end of one of those continuous days of fighting when tired and harassed, not certain what was the response of the Lord to his prayers, he sat down by the mouth of his cave and sighed for a draught of that water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem which had refreshed him on many an evening when he came in with his flock from the distant pastures. As tired as the king himself, as hot and worn with the conflict of the day, must have been the three mighty men of valour who overheard the exclamation and looked at each other with a simultaneous purpose, true brothers-in-arms—accustomed to stand by each other shoulder to shoulder—knowing, in the true humility of generous souls, that the king who bore the burden of care for all, was of more value than all three to Israel and the world. They must have stolen out from his presence into the night breathless with that common thought, to make their way through those crowding hosts with whose breathing the very air of the desert was heavy, and heedless of watch or picket about Bethlehem, to the well at the gate. Eleazer was one of them, he who has had the honour of being selected as M. Renan's favourite: and two others whose names vary in the record—Jashobeam the son of Hachmoni, and Shammah from Harar, men who knew every step of the way. They forced their passage through the night, through a hundred deaths, like knights of the Round Table, like followers of Robert Bruce or Cœur de Lion. The entire tale is pure chivalry,

worthy of the age in which such sheer devotion was the ideal of the spotless character. And like the high hero of the poet's dream, the Arthur who never was by sea or shore, David whom we all discuss with so many disparagements, the ambitious, the schemer, the voluptuary —David received this proof of supreme devotion like the prince and poet he was. "My God forbid it me," he cries, "that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives have they brought it." No drop of that precious cruse was for human lips. He poured it out before the Lord. Where did they learn this sentiment, unrevealed to the gracious Greek or noble Roman, the flower of Christian devotion and grace, those heroes of obscure and uncivilised tribes, the sons of herdsmen, the reivers and outlaws of the desert? This is beyond the power of any critic or commentator to tell.

In the life of every man whatever he may be the chief period of interest is that of struggle and suffering. Of the prosperous life, the successions of good fortune, the conquests and the triumphs there is little to say. Who cares for the addition of feoff to feoff, and victory to victory? When the hero wades deep in troubled waters, when his life is a series of hairbreadth escapes and incessant efforts, then it is that men care to look on, to mark and listen, to watch with long-drawn breath the successive billows that roll over his head, the tide that threatens to submerge him altogether. If one might risk such a conjecture as that the innumerable worlds which form the universe were peopled with faithful hosts who have never broken the law of God nor been placed in the conditions of temptation, one might imagine this little tragic earth, the abode of sorrow, to be in its way, to that great audience, an endless centre of interest and spectatorship, an

unfolding drama, with its great rolls of story full within and without of lamentation and mourning. It is the common idea of humanity that its own extraordinary and incomprehensible being is in some sort the centre of the universe, an idea of which it would be impossible to disabuse the primitive mind, and which it is difficult even for the most fully informed to forego. We know that the stars are greater worlds than our own and that they are innumerable in their greatness, but still the inalienable poetry of nature compels us to see in them the lights that fill our nights with beauty, the spectators of our wayward courses. It may be that we are indeed the object of continual interest in this other way. The record of happiness is blank: the moving story, the eloquence, the poetry, even the keener flashes of delight, must all be the accompaniments of mortal distress. We can purchase the attention of the spheres in no other way.

And in David's case the time had now arrived of success and widespreading victory. He overcame all the peoples round him, taking homage and tribute from the Moabites and Philistines, and from distant Damascus, the renowned city where he "put garrisons," bringing from it golden shields and "much brass": a curious token that the same industry which flourishes still in that ancient and wealthy place, was already one of its known attributes. One can imagine the Israelitish warriors, unused to such wonders, prowling about the great bazaars, probably little different from those of to-day, and gazing amazed at the glittering wares high piled upon every side, the wonderful carpets, the vessels of gold and silver, the garments woven in many colours: carrying off that for the king, and this to gladden the eyes of those daughters of Israel who would greet their returning steps with song and pour out from every village to hail the conquerors. Amalek and Edom alike owned the suprem-

acy of David, and the great traders of Tyre, perhaps to divert his attention from their wealth, and the fact that they had no army on land sufficient to resist him, made haste to offer their friendship and their gifts and their skilful workmen to build the new king a palace worthy his great name. It was perhaps the first introduction of anything that could be called luxury into the spare dwellings of the hitherto but partially settled tribes: and the wonder must have spread through the little rocky city as the caravans arrived with their spoils, and the Tyrians with their loads of cedar: and the great hewn stones, Cyclopean masses which still are the wonder of the excavators of the nineteenth century, were dragged up the steep slant to that mount where the new palace walls began to show, a miracle of strength and beauty. The city of the Jebusites had come to as great promotion as had the king himself who had tended his few sheep in the wilderness some dozen years before. The carvings and the decorations of his new house abashed David himself in all the elation of his victories. His astonishment at his own greatness took the form, in a mind so open to all generous emotions, of compunction. "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains," he said to that uncompromising prophet, Nathan, who here makes his earliest appearance in the record. Not to David, however, was this privilege given. Nathan who had at first encouraged his wish to build for the Lord a still nobler palace than his own, came back to his royal patron with another message, full of grace yet of severity. God would not accept the offering: yet He rewarded the intention by a promise to establish the house of David, given as would seem in compensation for the refusal. He would not accept from the warrior who had shed much blood, that Temple in all its magnificence, the house for the Lord,

which already had shaped itself in his fervent imagination. Not for him, with blood upon his hands, was this great and crowning achievement of life to be. To the poet, framing in his mind all glorious things, who had already begun to muse and dream of the great walls, the fragrant portals of cedar, the wreathed work of the cornices and capitals, this was no doubt a terrible check and disappointment. Many years after when he unfolded his plans to his son Solomon, David described all the decorations which he desired to be carried out in the yet unbuilt Temple, with a sigh of unaccomplished desire. "All this," he said, "the Lord made me understand in writing by hand upon me," an expression in which there is all the pathos of a cherished hope unfulfilled.

When Nathan left him after this interview David entered into the tent where the Ark dwelt in solemn gloom under its curtains, and poured out his soul in thanks to God, who had promised to establish his house for ever.

> "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house,
> That Thou hast so brought me hitherto?
> Yet was this but a small thing in Thy sight,
> O Lord God;
> But Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house
> For a great while to come.
> And is this the manner of man,
> O Lord God?"

It was not the manner of man: and yet there is a poignant note of pain in the outpouring of thanksgiving. The Lord had given him far more than he had thought of or demanded, not only a son to sit on his throne after him, but an everlasting throne to be established for ever, the throne of a greater than man already divinely indicated to the hopes of the world. Yet hidden in this bountiful giving there was a withholding which wrung David's heart: more a hundred times than he could have asked or imagined, but not the desire of his soul. He

had had his share of glory, the glory of great fame and honour and incalculable promotion, the renown of a great leader and ruler. He had established the dominion of Israel, and—crowning happiness in the eyes of an Eastern prince—he was thus proclaimed father of a never-ending line of kings to be: but that Temple of his dreams, more glorious than was ever built with hands, that great psalm erected in everlasting stone and lined with gold and filled with music, that beautiful imagination was refused to him. To know that Solomon should do it, was no doubt a great thing: but yet a man's son, though dear, is not himself. His was the imagination, his the heart in which this great thought had been conceived: but not to him should be the blessedness of carrying it out. His thanksgiving is, we cannot but feel, almost aching with a humility and pathetic acknowledgment of the overwhelming mercy of the promise, too great almost for human thanks, yet acute with an unexpressed pang within. "O Lord God, Thou hast spoken it; Thou hast revealed to Thy servant 'I will build Thee an house.'" But in the pouring out of that blessing God had brought his servant to a sudden pause. It was not for him, that man so favoured, to have the last boon which above all things he desired most.

Thus David also had his great disappointment in the midst of all his glory and success.

It would have been well for his future peace had the record of these years of success and peaceful consolidation of the kingdom, varied by much building at Jerusalem, and increase and decoration of the capital, contained no darker story. But the severe impartiality of the history spares David not a line of the condemnation due to him: although it is true that this impartial history itself says not a word either of blame or praise—and only reflects as in an incorruptible mirror the incident which is the

chief reproach of his life. By this time he had retired from the active conduct of the wars which were still going on all around under the generalship of the redoubtable Joab. David himself had been prevented by the strong remonstrance of his counsellors and the people generally from leading his own army as in former times "lest Thou quench the light of Israel," and had yielded to that reasonable prayer: so that now "at the time when kings go forth to battle," a curious indication of the warlike habit of the nations round, "David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel" to destroy Ammon, or whatsoever other work of the kind might be in hand. "And David sat in his house"—set aside, although on the complimentary argument that his life was too valuable to be risked: and dreamed of the Temple he was not to be allowed to build, and entered in all the force of his mature life and passions into the storm of fierce temptation, never so strong as with those whose active life has thus come to a pause.

There were in those days no scruples in Israel as to polygamy, and David was in this respect very far from a saint. He seems at once to have celebrated his conquest of Jerusalem, for instance, by taking more wives out of the newly acquired city, the one event following the other as a natural consequence in a manner almost comic to our eyes. But to take into his house the wife of another great warrior, a man of sufficient importance to appear among the list of the thirty heroes, was a more serious matter. It is unfortunately in all history an incident so common that it would scarcely have counted as a reproach in any other literature, and few kings have the right to throw stones at David. But the careful record of his attempts to conceal the shame of the woman and avoid the vengeance of the man whom he had dishonoured, bring the whole matter before us too clearly to be ig-

nored. David dared not, it would seem, risk such a scandal in his new capital, and to hide his guilt had recourse first to mean expedients and then to a bloody and desperate act. Failing in all attempts to seduce Uriah he sent to Joab in the field that commission of murder and treachery. "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle." To be in the van is at all times a credit for a soldier, the post of honour, as of danger: probably Uriah was made to feel himself the selected champion, and so, let us hope, met his death gloriously with no consciousness of the shameful cause.

It is curious to remark that the uncompromising Joab, who was by no means certain to give to his master's orders a servile obedience, made no remonstrance in this case as he did so often, nor, it would seem, ever asked a question. He was accustomed to carry out his own schemes of vengeance with the utmost indifference to David's opinions, or to any motive either of mercy or policy: and probably he took it for granted that this was a personal quarrel, which the king proposed to avenge otherwise than by his own hand: or if he had any information on the subject of Bathsheba, the motive would be still more simple. He carried out the order with prosaic straightforwardness, and a certain grim despatch: sending back the king's messenger with an account of the proceedings in which there is a fine irony of which David could not but be conscious. "Tell the king" such and such details, says Joab. "And if the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

Who can venture to imagine what was in the heart of the king when he received this message? He was a man full of generous impulses, if also of passion and deter-

mination to satisfy all his desires. There was a hideous pause during which the wife of Uriah mourned for her husband, which seems to the reader an additional horror in the mockery of sorrow. But let us hope that Bath-sheba knew nothing about the cause of his death, and that even the guilty satisfaction with which she must have felt that this event secured her own safety, would stir up compunctions in her mind and make the mourning not all a pretence and mockery. To enter into the harem of the king in such circumstances would be not unattended by trouble we may be sure, to the woman whose story would be whispered with many a commentary from one to another by those free-spoken women of Israel, who, notwithstanding the bondage of polygamy, were never slow to express their opinions, even to their lord himself. But for David there was reserved a more emphatic condemnation. The incident would have been swept aside, like so many similar incidents in the lives of kings, perhaps would never have secured a mention in the chronicle, but for the Divine reproof that followed. If as M. Renan[1] supposes the records of David's life were taken from his own account, favourably shaped in his own interest, it would be difficult to imagine what the motive could be for introducing the parable of Nathan—unless that the poet gained mastery over the man, and David felt himself incapable of keeping back a story so instinct with poetry and feeling. The king was in the flush of passion satisfied, and the excitement of a new incident in the life of comparative inactivity, to which he was now condemned, when Nathan appeared charged with his message. The prophet came as to the

[1] That great authority is of opinion that the story of Uriah is a mere fable, though he does not tell us on what grounds—perhaps as a compensation to David for taking his Psalms from him: and certainly a great relief to all our minds could we take M. Renan's word for it.

judge of Israel, bound to see right and justice administered everywhere, with his brief but tremendous indictment.

"There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." Nothing could add to the beauty and simple force of the parable. It has become for all time the protest of the weak, the strongest plea against the oppressor. David hasty and generous was in arms in a moment against the ruthless tyrant. "His anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man."

In all history there is no situation more striking—the prophet strong in the inspiration of his message from on high, probably fired also with human indignation, facing the all-powerful Eastern chief in whose hands were life and death, the royal lover who had shrunk from nothing in the carrying out of his desires. If there ever was a moment in which David was minded to strike down his accuser there is no sign of it in the record. That fiery arrow went to his heart. "I have sinned against the Lord," is all that he can say.

It is curious to note the character of the immediate chastisement, first sign and symbol of much more to

come, which is said to have followed. The loss of a new-born infant would seem but a small matter in that overflowing Eastern house, swarming with the sons of the king; yet no father of one sole heir and hope could have felt it more deeply than David appears to have done. As he lies on the ground in an agony of humiliation and prayer all the night through, beseeching God for the life of his child, absorbed and swallowed up in his penitence as he was before in his pleasure, the heart of the reader melts over the stricken man. His punishment was far from being over in the death of that innocent. Absalom lay before him in his way, and Amnon, and many a grief connected with his children: not easily or lightly was his expiation to be made: but no man, and still less any woman, who has passed through such a vigil, will refuse the tribute of sympathy to David. What was one little life among so many? but of each was it not possible that he was the chosen one, the seed of David who was to sit upon David's throne for ever? When all was over, and he rose from his prostration in that calm which his astonished servants could not understand, those words with which millions of bereaved parents have endeavoured to staunch their wounds, fell from David's lips: "I will go to him; but he shall not return to me." The child had a better fate than that of any king's son: the father went out to his duties a changed and sobered man.

The very next step in his career plunges him into his more real and bitter punishment, into those troubles of a father among a tumultuous company of high-spirited and privileged young men, which the father of princes can perhaps best understand, but which are not unknown to humbler spheres. That "evil against him out of his own house" which Nathan had denounced was not slow to come. It is impossible to understand the story, so

painful and revolting to our ears, of Amnon and Tamar, nor how it could be possible that a legitimate and permitted bond could exist between the son and daughter, even though by different mothers, of the same man. But the vengeance of Absalom is quite comprehensible, justifiable indeed according to every rule of that primitive period. It opens to us another glimpse of the economy of Israel and the manners of the time. It would seem that Absalom was in special favour with his father, one of the chief among the king's sons, to all of whom in his excess of parental love David was over-indulgent. His mother was a king's daughter, who must have caught the roving eye of David in his raid upon Ziklag against the kingdom of Geshur: and he was himself the most handsome and distinguished of all his contemporaries "without blemish from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot," a son of whom any father might be proud. Probably his birth on his mother's side designated him more or less surely as the heir, notwithstanding Amnon's seniority, and he must have been able and ambitious as well as distinguished in other ways. The party of pleasure, which he made—a sheep-shearing, which was the great festival of the time, upon his pastoral farm at Baal-hazor, near Ephraim—is the first note of his individual story after his reception of his unfortunate sister. It would be strange if some spectators in Jerusalem had not seen the outraged Tamar go weeping by, with dust upon her head, and the fair apparel of the king's daughter rent in the anguish of her shame, or known of her abode, in solitude and sadness in her brother's house. But the doer of the wrong had evidently escaped punishment: and was not afraid, which is still more remarkable, to trust himself in the power of the brother whom he had thus grievously insulted.

The young men went down out of Jerusalem joyously to their merry-making, each with his little retinue of familiars, his counsellor and henchman at his elbow, making the streets gay with their finery and their jests. Jerusalem by this time had blossomed into something very different from that strait little city of the Jebusites. David's great new palace blazed in the sun upon the height, and the new wealth, the constant acquisition of territory, the tributes and offerings of the people, pouring into his treasury, had no doubt made itself felt in the expansion of all his surroundings. He had built houses innumerable for the officials and chiefs who surrounded him, and filled the town with swarming inhabitants and enlarged it on every side. It was "builded as a city that is compact together" according to a later description, and must have been surrounded with new and enlarged fortifications, walls and ramparts from which the watchman could sweep the whole country, and the surrounding valleys both north and south. Winding along through the pleasant fields on the comparative level of the northern side, the group of gay young cavaliers must have been a cheerful sight to the gazers who came out to the gates after them to see the revellers pass by. The king himself had refused—as probably it was certain he would do—the invitation of his son, with a smile and a blessing. The joys of youth were by this time over for David, and he and his graver court would have been a hindrance to the rustic mirth and jollity. Young Solomon was in all likelihood but an open-eyed all-observant child, of no account, not thought of among the festivities of the elders, when the king watched his beautiful boy, that gallant son of whom he was so proud, with his abundant locks upon his shoulders, setting off down the stony street. There is perhaps a more exquisite pleasure in sending forth the

children in their glory and joy of youth, than there was in that joy when possessed by ourselves. David must have turned back to his graver life with the smile and the blessing still upon his lips.

But very different was the return. Towards the evening while it was scarcely yet time to look for the home-coming of the revellers, a hasty post came wildly up the hill, with clang of hoofs and breathless shout of evil tidings—the king's sons all killed, the sheep-shearing turned into a carnage. Before it reached David the cry had become more definite. "Absalom has slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left." The king heard the evil news and it would seem did not doubt or question. Was Absalom so masterful, so intent upon being the first that there was something in it which sounded possible, even likely, to the father's heart? He tore his garments and threw himself on the earth in his despair while all the servants stood weeping round. The king's nephew, however, Jonadab, interposed the voice of reason. We feel with indignation that he was the last who should have dared to speak, since it was he who had counselled Amnon to the crime which had now received its punishment. Was he jealous of the king's sons and plotting their destruction, this "subtil man" who had pretended to be Amnon's friend? He consoled David by heightening the certainty at least of a portion of the disaster. "Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men, the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead. By the appointment of Absalom this has been determined." Perhaps this adviser of evil was the confidant of both: at least he was wise and divined what must have happened. While he spoke the watchman on the wall came in with news that a train of many people was coming up "by the way of the hill-side behind," a roundabout way perhaps adopted in their

panic to deceive the possible pursuer: and immediately there burst into the hall the frightened and breathless company of the young men who had left home so gaily. "They lifted up their voice and wept sore: and the king and all his servants wept." They were safe, but one brother was dead, and one fled with the stain of blood upon him. There would be among that distracted group some for Amnon and some for Absalom: the brother who had brought shame on the whole family and the brother who had avenged that shame so bitterly: but they were all probably very young and in their sudden terror unfit for anything but flight. And was it, perhaps, already floating through all minds that the foolish indulgence of David, who had not chastised the crime of the first, was thus to blame for the whole catastrophe? but on these points we can but conjecture, the record says nothing. Amnon was the firstborn of David's sons, and perhaps that distinction made it more difficult for him to visit one who was next to the head of the house, and held a certain right of authority over the others, with the punishment he deserved. It was also no doubt an additional motive to Absalom in whose heart the hope of succeeding, if not already the idea of superseding his father had taken root, to remove his elder brother out of his way.

This was the beginning of the tragedy which overshadowed the remainder of David's life and brought him into affliction and downfall greater than in all the troubles of his youth he had ever known. Jerusalem, after the time of mourning was over which filled her lately rejoicing streets with woe, came back to her usual aspect and went on with her building and thriving, covering the hillside with new houses, extending her boundaries day by day, welcoming back her armies crowned with victory, and her visitors who came, with designs and ornamental works, from all the regions in which art

flourished to show what they could do to the king. The city throve, the kingdom increased in extent and order, the soldiers of Israel and their general returned to their homes in the stormy season, and went forth with their banners flying in the spring. The natural course and order of all things went on as before. But the King of Israel in his house of cedar, the palace that shone in the sunshine, was cheered neither by conquest nor tribute, nor by the vessels of gold and silver which he was laying up, nor the plans which he was drawing out for the future house of God. His heart was heavy for his children, not only for Amnon dead, but for Absalom in exile, whose gallant presence he missed at every point and for whom he sighed night and day, although justice forbade him to call the sinner back. No doubt there would be many besides David who sighed for Absalom, his mother, and his friends, and the populace which loved him, and remembered with pride and regret his beauty and his graciousness, and did not condemn too severely the vengeance which commended itself to every wild law of natural justice.

Absalom in the meantime had sought refuge with his mother's brother at Geshur, still, it would appear, in its small way an independent kingdom; and three melancholy years elapsed, during which "the soul of King David longed to go forth" to his banished son, but could not withdraw his sentence from the murderer of his brother. The blunt and uncourtly Joab perceived the state of affairs when laid up in winter quarters in enforced leisure, no fighting practicable in the stormy season, when the rains flooded the great rivers, and wild winds dashed every tent to the ground. He might feel that nothing he could himself say in his stubborn way would much affect the matter, and yet that he must do something to cut the knot. His expedient was full of

the simplicity yet primitive wisdom of the time. He sent a wise woman to David as he sat sad and moody in the place of judgment, with a simulated story. Her two sons had quarrelled in the field with no one near to act as peacemaker, and one had killed the other; and now her whole kindred had risen against her, desiring vengeance, and the life of her only remaining child was in deadly peril. David listened no doubt with many a sad thought in his own heart, and promised her protection for her son; whereupon the woman put forth her trembling plea for Absalom. "The king," she said with that boldness which the women seemed to share with the prophets, though their sex was but a small protection to them in those primitive times, "the king doth speak this thing as one that is faulty, in that the king does not fetch home again his banished."

How could he punish her who advised him to do what his soul most desired? David divined the hand of Joab in the contrivance and was not angry. Joab no doubt had done what he could to plead the cause of Absalom before, and now he had his reward and was sent to bring the exile home. It is evident that David never loved the son of Zeruiah of whom he speaks in angry bitterness, always in the plural as if he were a tribe, probably because the brethren were involved in Joab, thinking and acting with him, so as to give to his single personality the force of several men. But there was a great deal of ingratitude in this dislike, for Joab's rough good sense and sagacity was of use to him often in the great crises of his life. It is doubtful if this was good advice which he offered now; but it would not seem that any one as yet had suspected the ambitious side of Absalom's character. He had been the representative of grace and all that was beautiful and noble in youth, an ornament to the too abundant family and undeveloped

court. But most likely nobody had taken the handsome youth seriously until that deed of blood which distinguished him still more effectually than his good looks and royal parentage, from among the crowd of his brethren—or indeed thought of that action now as anything but a well-deserved and not dishonourable revenge.

Two years of humiliation followed during which Absalom, though permitted to inhabit Jerusalem, was not allowed to enter his father's house, or see his face, years which were no doubt more hard upon the king who loved his son than upon the son who was plotting how best to overthrow his father's throne. It is difficult to account for so long continued a punishment in this case, while Amnon had been allowed to go free. Was it that an injury to a woman counted for so much less, even in Israel? but this was not according to the law, which showed a singular impartiality in that respect; or was it because his firstborn was more or less out of David's power? for that he did not love Absalom less but rather more is apparent from every line of the record. Perhaps the very love he bore the offender was a reason for special severity, his sense of the necessity of justice being intensified by the weakness and yearning of his own paternal heart. At last, however, upon the mediation again of Joab the last barrier was thrown down. During this long period when the guilty son of the royal house was in Jerusalem, but unacknowledged by his father, many unsuspected intrigues were going on, and the young man must have drawn about him a sort of secondary court of the disappointed and discontented, such a court as, in our own history, a Prince of Wales has sometimes held, full of dissatisfaction and bitterness, of open ridicule and suppressed rebellion, and of those jibes which the populace loves. David and his old-fashioned ways, his poetry, his music, his inactivity,

his continual poring over those plans for the impossible Temple, his encouragement of foreign artists, filling Jerusalem with useless dilettantism, taking the bread out of his warriors' mouths, would no doubt be the subject of many a lampoon, whispered from guest to guest, with bursts of profane laughter. Who was to carry out those plans and put away all that treasure from the use of those who were young and full of the faculty of enjoyment? Not Absalom one might be sure, who loved to have everything beautiful and splendid about him, and had all the royal instincts of magnificence which David, humbly born, directed to that dream of a house of God. And the people who loved David in reality, yet never can resist the influence of such jests, no doubt laughed too, pleased to make that harmless rebellion against constituted authority, and full of malicious hostility to the foreigners, the artists who would be closeted with the king for hours while even his own son was kept out. And all that was young and gay would collect about Absalom who had pleasure and advancement to bestow in the future and for the present a lively youthful house full of sport and brightness instead of those sober chambers of the monarch where care dwelt and serious thought.

When the embargo was removed from this dangerous prince, and the king had received him with ill-deserved effusion of long-suppressed love, Absalom became bolder still. He set up a household beyond the pretensions even of a Prince of Wales, like a king, with an army of running footmen when he went forth to clear the way before him, and all the tokens of Oriental greatness. He had learned that fashion no doubt at his uncle's court at Geshur, where the uses of royalty were more firmly established than among the democratic Hebrews. And he took another step of such cruel policy that the hand of

Ahithophel, the wisest of the Israelites, must have been already in it, though that great counsellor was not yet openly on Absalom's side. He made a practice of going out to the gate where it was the king's duty to sit in judgment and hear all the cases that were brought before him, placing himself in all his bravery, and with his gracious bearing, in the way of the litigants. It is implied though not said that David had become perhaps careless of this duty, came seldom to the seat of justice, was more and more preoccupied and absorbed, as it would be the policy of the plotters to represent, with that Temple of his, and his plan of hiding away for its future use or ornament all those treasures of gold and silver, from the public treasury, from being of any use to the people. Outside the gates upon the open square where travellers paused to take breath after the steep climb upwards, what a sight to see would be that young prince, the handsomest man in Israel, with his train of followers! and so friendly in his splendour, stepping forward to inquire "of what city art thou?" nay, more courteous still, to give the kiss of peace to those who paid him the tokens of respect due to his position, and to ask what was their business, to hear their case, to commiserate their grievance whatever it was, and agree that they were right, with only the deep regret, "Oh that I were judge, that I might do justice!" and shaking of the head over the sad fact that there was no man deputed from the king to hear, or stranger still that no man from the king downward would listen to the plaints of the people. "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

It was not within Jerusalem, however, that the rebellion broke forth. Notwithstanding Absalom's popularity and wiles, David was too firmly seated in his own city, the place which he had changed from a fortified village into the capital of a kingdom, to be cast violently off his

throne there. The rebel pleaded a vow which he had taken to perform sacrifices at Hebron, and received his father's permission to leave Jerusalem for that purpose with a strong following, all his own intimates and their trains, and two hundred men in addition who apparently formed the escort of the pretended pilgrims. Some time elapsed before it became known in Jerusalem what this expedition meant, and then we must suppose from his after conduct that it burst like a thunderbolt upon David, who had either been unaware of all that was happening, or had turned a deaf ear to any further accusation against his son after having been separated from him so long. The conduct of David seems unaccountable in this sudden and great emergency. Not a thought of resistance or the maintenance of his own right seems to have been in him, nothing of the spirit of the old warrior. It is true that he was already an old man; but that does not seem to account for the complete collapse, not only of power, but of spirit, in him. The first thoughts in his mind when he heard that his son was in open revolt were those of terror and submission. "Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword." The one word of generous feeling in this, the desire to preserve Jerusalem from the horrors of a siege and the vengeance of the successful rebels, is the only thing that softens the reader's amazement and almost contempt. The great David, the hero of so many fights, the conqueror not of Jerusalem alone but of so many lands and cities, he who had been celebrated in song in his very boyhood as the slayer of tens of thousands—that he should rise and fly without a word or attempt at holding his own is so extraordinary that the spectator can but look on aghast. What was it that took all the strength

out of the old warrior and all his courage? Was it those long years of inactive life, the creeping sloth of age, the loss of every habit of enterprise, the preoccupation with other things? Had his essays in art, his pattern drawing, his plans of architecture, taken all the spirit out of the old hero? But even in an old war-horse, full of years and corn, there will still remain the ashes of his former fires. One cannot but feel that there must have been more in it, the sense of a long deferred, but all the more potent, punishment, that evil out of his own house which had been promised to him many years before when he himself was in the heyday of life. He had thought, and perhaps Nathan his instructor had also thought, that the death of Bathsheba's infant was a sufficient blow to a father so exceptionally tender: but what words were those which came back now echoing in his ears? "Therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house." "Evil shall be raised up against thee out of thine own house." "Thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

Who can doubt that these threatenings were in David's ears? and that the sense that not only Absalom, his cherished son—a thought in itself enough to crush the father's heart—but the Lord was against him, took all strength out of his spirit? What sight more sad was ever seen than that melancholy train hurrying out of the protecting walls which he had built and strengthened, leaving behind the desolated house which he had built for his dynasty, himself and his sons after him, the palace and the city of David. What a different place was that which he left with a wail of trouble rising round him, from the strait little city of which he had taken possession so many years before! He had enlarged it on every side, embellished and enriched it, made it the centre of law, the chief city of Palestine, already

the glory and the pride of Israel. There is not a word to say that the inhabitants rose against him in his distress. His guards were faithful to him, the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and the Gittites, the Swiss Guards, so to speak, whom he had banded about him to keep the peace and defend the city when the soldiers of Israel were at the wars. The captain of these mercenaries is the cause indeed of one of the pauses in David's evidently hopeless flight. "Return to thy place, and abide with the king," he says with the strangest instantaneous abdication of that dignity in his own person. "For thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, why should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: and mercy and truth be with thee." We recognise our generous hero of the Adullam days, the magnanimous young soldier who never sacrificed a friend, in this episode: and it is good to feel that the brave Gittite was worthy of the consideration, and faithful to his protector.

Something of the same care for others mingling with a reverential unwillingness to disturb the worship of God, must have been in David's mind when he sent back the Ark which the priests and Levites had brought out of the city, and set down probably on the platform before the gate, in imitation of the days when that sacred Ark was posted in the middle of the way until the marshalled ranks of Israel had gone over—whether Jordan or other dangerous passes: once more the priests, the descendants of Aaron, set down their sacred burden while the troubled train poured forth "until all the people had done passing out of the city." But David with his old compunction returning in all the despair of remorse into his heart, would not assume for himself the position of that ancient Israel, the people of the Lord, travelling under

His sanction and guardianship. How could a guilty wanderer flying from the vengeance that had been denounced upon him lay that flattering unction to his soul? It seems to have brought a faint glimmer of hope, however, into his mind to see the sacred symbol and feel that the sympathies of the priests were with him; for a thought of coming back breaks in now for the first time into his despair. "Carry back the Ark of God into the city," he says. "If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation."

The mournful procession must have paused while the priests took up their burden, and turned sadly back: and David stood gazing after it, with death in his heart. Was it for this he had brought it back out of the neglect and indifference of many years, for this that he had bidden those ancient narrow portals to be lifted up, the old doors to be thrown open to their widest that the King of Glory might come in? But on what side now was that King of Glory? against David as his own beloved son was against David, and all the vials of wrath poured out upon his head. Very different now were those great gates and lofty columns from the narrow arch which had framed the doorway under which the Ark first passed. He must have watched it disappearing, the white attendants winding along between the dark houses, the daughters of Jerusalem gazing and weeping at every window—then turned away, with his face towards the desert once more. The dark crowd moved downward into the depths of the valley and across the brook, winding round the southern side of Moriah, all green and fertile, with nothing but Araunah's farm-buildings upon its crest, and took its way towards the wilderness. "And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron." One

cannot but remember how often in after days He who was the Son of David passed over that brook, going to His sacred meditations in the garden, or coming back to the cross and the grave.

"David went up the ascent of Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went." This was evidently more than a mere flight: it was a penitential procession, a confession of the half-forgotten sins for which now, at last, retribution had come. He was going back to those old haunts where his troubled youth had been spent: and he remembered his errors and bowed his head before that justice which had tarried long but never had forgotten. It might have been said of David as it was of Job—had he served God for nought? What promotion had been given to him, what prosperity, what glory! "I have seen the wicked flourish like a green bay tree." How his own words, the utterances of his prosperous and glorious days, must have poured back upon his mind as he went forth leaving all behind him. And, deepest pang of all, by the hand of his son whom he loved, who had brought misery and shame upon him, but towards whom his heart never ceased to yearn. Those who scoff at David and set forth his great crime as the central point of his life can never have followed the tragedy through its after scenes. That was indeed its central point to his own consciousness, the grand contradiction to all the generosities and magnanimities of his life, the one occasion on which passion made him false and cruel, he whose nature was so chivalrous and kind. What humiliation was too great for the man who had so sinned, whose offence had thus been brought back to him in all the terrible and vivid light of Divine judgment? He had forgotten it in the calm of many

prosperous years: but God had not forgotten it. What else but this could have taken the heart out of the old warrior, the mighty man of valour? We all remember against him the death of Uriah: but few take any account of the stricken father, the fugitive king, the self-humiliated penitent, his head bowed under the veil of mourning, his feet torn upon the stony ways, his glory departed from him, and most of all his son turned against him, his son whom he loved. Not only the death of Uriah, but many an error besides was no doubt in David's mind, and that sense of supreme failure which is so bitter in the heart of a parent whose children are unkind and undutiful: — the consciousness of weak indulgence, of misplaced severity, of a house not well ordered before God, must have added the gnawing of the serpent's tooth to all other distresses. A thankless child! and the thought that had he himself been otherwise, more just, more firm, less disposed to humour all their fancies, these sons might not have been the passionate tumultuous tribe who already had cost him so much sorrow. Amnon dead: Tamar shamed and broken-hearted: Absalom in fierce rebellion, seeking his father's life. David might well go upon his way weeping, overwhelmed with the bitterness of his downfall. Many a man was there in Israel who had sinned more grievously and met with no such punishment.

The adventures of the way were partly consolatory and partly grievous. Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth, into whose motives David did not inquire in the practical comfort furnished by his politic contribution of food and wine; Shimei who came out like a cur to jibe at the fallen monarch, and curse him in his humiliation; the faithful Hushai whom with a momentary gleam of spirit he sent back to confound the counsels of Ahithophel, all broke for good or for evil the monotony of the journey;

and when the mournful party came to a halt, the liberal succours afforded both by friends and former enemies—the King of Ammon among others, with generous forgetfulness of old feuds, sending supplies to the camp—must have softened the first sensation of unmitigated distress, as the necessity for exertion in itself and the experience of every new event must always do more or less. David was still so self-abased in his keen consciousness of Divine chastisement, that he would permit no vengeance to be taken upon the vulgar abuse of Shimei who threw stones at him as he passed. "Behold, my son seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it?" he says as he passes on.

In the meantime a terrible scene was being enacted in Jerusalem, one of insult and affront to the king, which is inconceivable to modern minds, not to speak of individual shame and horror, which is never taken account of at all in any primitive record. The distracted city had not stopped its weeping for David when Absalom and his train came clanging up the steep ascent making the walls ring with their shoutings, and the noise of their cavalcade. The women at the windows with the tears not dried in their eyes, would yet, no doubt, flash forth a glance of welcome at the newcomer, the handsome Absalom in himself a spectacle to drive care away. He who had all the charm that had distinguished his father in his youth would not be wanting, we may be sure, in salutations flung here and there on every side, at each familiar face, the touch of his rapid hand from his breast to his brow, heart and head engaged in the old allegorical greeting—with all his young men after him, flushed with excitement and daring, and the hope of advancement to come. The crowd would gaze and sway and change, as crowds do, welcoming, as every crowd must, the relief of pleasure after mourning, the happy possi-

bility of forgetting that any one is injured, in the satisfaction of restored brightness and triumph. And the throng would surge on after him, pushing up the streets, pouring out of every house, towards the palace which stood vacant in the guardianship of those ten poor women—empty for any man to seize and take possession of it. One wonders whether that dark counsellor by Absalom's side, a mere speck among the bravery of the brilliant train, had wrongs or slights to avenge against David who knew his force, at least, whether he had employed him or not? or if it were mere cold wisdom and policy which dictated his advice?[1] Ahithophel was well aware that hereafter no compromise was possible, and that the wisest thing to do was to press the matter at once to its violent conclusion. He knew, though the foolish young men did not, that David's spirit must come back, that the country must come to its senses, and that the greatest captains, as well as the most trustworthy of the people, were, though scared and silenced for the moment, on David's side. When therefore Hushai came in with his counsel of delay, the real conspirator felt at once that all was over. What need to wait till David came back, till legitimate vengeance disposed of his head, his property and all that was his? Most likely the wild young following of the prince, and Absalom himself in the heat of his triumph, were glad when that serious plotter turned from them in disgust and despair, taking away the dark shade of his dissatisfied face from the night of uproar and commotion which would follow

[1] Ahithophel is traced in the lists given in the Book of Samuel as having been the father of a certain Eliam. And Bathsheba, David's wife, was the daughter of Eliam: whence it has been supposed that she was the grand-daughter of Ahithophel. But Eliam is not an uncommon name, and it is difficult to understand how the wise man could be the deadly opponent of his grandchild's husband in the interest of another branch of the family.

such a day. He who foresaw the inevitable results could have looked on with little satisfaction at the revel had he remained, and the sound of the hoofs of his mule, as he turned again down the stony street and answered the challenge of the watchman at the gates, would no doubt be a good riddance to the triumphant crew who felt that, counsel or no counsel, everything was now at their feet.

Meantime David, having put the Jordan between himself and the rebels, had established himself in Mahanaim, a city near the borders of Israel, near enough to Ammon to flutter the hearts of the Ammonites, who were not guiltless towards him, though they had hastened to propitiate him by presents. For by this time the fugitives had grown into a host, with the greatest generals of Israel at its head, men who were entitled to make but light of Absalom, a man of pleasure and not of war, though he had Amasa of their own warlike blood, a grandson of Jesse of Bethlehem, as were the sons of Zeruiah, to lead his followers. What Joab's sentiments were about the matter it is not difficult to imagine; a deep wrath and disgust with his showy and specious cousin must have been in his self-restrained and stubborn spirit. It had been he who had induced David to follow the dictates of his own longing and bring home his rebellious son. He had in a manner answered for Absalom, that now all would go well. And the man he had thus protected and served had overturned the kingdom which was founded on the labours of Joab's life as well as David's, after many a tough struggle and weary watch. In Joab's heart there was none of that love which had weakened the judgment of the king. He, too, no doubt, had regarded with affection in his way the beautiful boy who had grown up under his eyes, his gracious young kinsman, gay and pleasant, who had charmed all Israel. He had been seduced into believing that to be restored to his

own house and his people was all that Absalom wanted. But now that he was undeceived there was no indulgence in Joab's heart. Had he been a man of policy alone we might imagine that the certainty that Absalom so long as he lived would be a standing danger to the crown, was what moved him most: but though his strong sense made that too apparent to him, Joab had thus more poignant reasons still for being remorseless towards Absalom who had deceived him.

Nothing could be more vivid, or more touching, than the picture of the setting out of the forces from their city of refuge to meet the rebels. The king was not allowed to go forth with them for reasons that are evident; but he came out and stood by the gate to see them march past "by hundreds and by thousands," in companies and battalions as we should say; and as each captain appeared at the head of his troop David stopped the march a moment for a parting word. It was not any counsel of war that the experienced old soldier gave to his officers. "Deal gently for my sake with the young man," was what the anxious father said. "And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom." With pity, with sympathy, with anger and impatience no doubt they listened, the common men, always the most accessible to emotion, touched and softened, while their leaders chafed, impatient of such a restriction. The rebel, the usurper, the traitor, condemned by all laws! was not this a weakness more than could be borne on the part of the king, who had been hunted from his home, the crown taken from his head, the allegiance of his people stolen away, by this same Absalom of whose safety now he thought more than of the welfare of all his faithful servants! Joab, for one, must have given neither answer nor pledge, but marched on with his stubborn countenance and certainty

that if he found that dainty gallant in his way there should be short shrift. Thus the army went forth to the battle.

And David "sat between the two gates." He was still the light of Israel, not to be risked in such a conflict, and perhaps his heart was too faint with the unnatural struggle, to seek a point of vantage whence he could see the approach of the messengers or the far-off dust of the battle. He sat where he could catch the first runner from the field, and hear the first news, but not see, perhaps, the rush of fugitives retiring, perhaps his son dragged hither a prisoner. When the watchman called out from above that some one was visible on the way and that his running was like that of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, the king in his anxiety answered that his news must be good for he was a good man: but it was not Ahimaaz, but the blunt Cushi, the other Levite whom Joab, not loving him it would seem, had charged with that dire news, who told it. David did not ask what was the issue of the fight, he said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" What did kingdom or crown matter in that awful moment—his son, his son! And how many a heartbroken man and woman, father and mother, have echoed that cry of anguish after him, which burst from his lips when the tale of victory was told. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Earth and Heaven are silent before that cry—there is no more that words can say.

"And the king went up to the chamber that was over the gate, and wept," the first place where he could hide his head, caring to hear nothing more. In all literature there is no such picture, so brief, so poignant and true. All policy, all satisfaction in his deliverance were forgotten. "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my

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ABSALOM'S PILLAR. VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT.

son!" This was the cry that the returning victors heard as they came back triumphant to the gates of the city, where, no doubt, the scared and sorrowful people were standing about, wrung to the heart by that outcry. The music stopped, the warriors huddled together, feeling, each man, as if he were a murderer. They broke out of their ranks and "gat them by stealth into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle." Nothing could be added that would not diminish the wonderful effect of such a description. The day was won, yet it was as if it had been lost.[1]

But so true, so real is the tale that when Joab strides in once more with his stubborn sense and practical force, even the most deeply-touched spectator cannot contradict him or disapprove. Short of that removal of the rebel, what peace could there have been for Israel? and the mourner who lay there with his face covered from the light of day, was a king first, and not a father at liberty to express his anguish. "Thou hast shamed the faces of thy servants, who this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and daughters," says the stern captain with his coat and heart of steel; "in that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died, then it had pleased thee well."

David could not resist this voice of reason. For a king there is little time for the indulgence of sorrow, or indeed for any man or woman encompassed with the cares of life. He descended from that retirement and

[1] I need say nothing to those critics who find in David's attitude a hypocritical pretence at sorrow. They may know philology and other learned sciences: but not the heart of man, that more wonderful thing still. M. Renan is naturally one of those apes of genius who mock this profoundest utterance of human sorrow.

sat in the gate, and received the captains who came before him, discouraged, with drooping crests, and such of the warriors as had not dispersed already, half indignant, half sorry to their homes. All that he could do to make up for his momentary failure it is clear that he did, but probably with but partial effect. And it is equally clear that Joab, never beloved, was in disgrace from that day. No doubt David heard of the personal share he had in the slaying of Absalom, and resented doubly on this account the abrupt disturbance of his seclusion by the very man who had struck the blow. He made overtures to Amasa, who had been Absalom's general, with some thought of policy perhaps, but assuredly more in bitterness and deep resentment. He would have nothing more to say to those sons of Zeruiah, who had always been as thorns in his flesh. When Amasa failed him, or seemed to fail, on a later occasion, it was to Abishai, the less important brother and not to Joab, whom David turned. But it was not long before that determined man regained, in his usual unscrupulous way by bloodshed and force, the command which was evidently his by right of nature. Whatever private feeling might do or say this great general was not to be put aside or ignored.

David came back to Jerusalem in a kind of melancholy triumph. He would have no vengeance taken upon the miserable Shimei who came down, like a cur, to the bank of Jordan to proffer his abject prayer for pardon. "Shall there any man be put to death to-day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?" he said. It is bad for David's fame that the matter did not rest there: but the most sentimental spectator could scarcely feel any sympathy for Shimei in his baseness. And David was lavish in his gratitude to Barzillai, the aged chief of Gilead, who had succoured him in his dis-

tress. His conduct to Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, whom he had protected all his life is less creditable: he had made a hasty promise of all that his master possessed to Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth, who had hurried after him on his flight with provisions for the retinue, and a false story of his master's hopes of recovering the kingdom. When the lame prince came hurrying out to the gates to meet the king, David—his heart heavy no doubt as he approached that fateful place where such orgies had been held in his absence, where Absalom had flashed through his brief reign of a day, where all the events of that brilliant young life, which was now over in trouble and shame, had taken place —was in little case for other thoughts. This lame son of Jonathan, this disabled man, lived and was faithful, while the tragedy of the other was ended. There are moments when even the goodness of another is bitter to us in comparison with the failure of our own. And he was weary and sick at heart with all the demands upon him which triumph and victory made. When it was made apparent to him that his decision in favour of Ziba had been a rash one, he replied in that weariness and impatience with which a man harassed beyond his powers, turns from the error he cannot undo: "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land." It was unjust and unkind, but David was driven to the end of his strength. Was it not enough that he had to keep a smile upon his face, to keep up a joyful bearing, to reply to the plaudits and the songs, to look as if he were coming back as a conqueror, proud and glad of the downfall of his adversary—although his adversary was his son, his best beloved for whom he would willingly have given his life. That fierce son of Zeruiah behind him with his stern reason would not spare David a jot of the triumph.

Perhaps it gave him a little ease to thrust poor Mephibosheth from him, Mephibosheth who had understanding, who did not insist, but fell back from the path of the suffering king.

After this return to Jerusalem there is but little remaining to record of the life of David. There was another rebellion, that of Sheba the son of Bichri, of which we are told little except in so far as it affected the disgraced general, Joab, who took the opportunity in his old trenchant way to rid himself of the man who had been put over him—Amasa, his cousin, who had been Absalom's general, and whom David had promoted, whether from policy or from a perverse regard for the man who had been his son's support, even against himself—or from sheer hatred of Joab and determination to get rid of him, it is impossible to say. Amasa had been a laggard, had not done all that was required of him; and Abishai had been sent out in his place to lead the hosts of Israel, Joab and his men following, apparently without any protest. But after Amasa was killed we hear of Abishai no more. Joab must have stepped into his natural place the moment the army was in the field and generalship was needed—generalship and policy as well. For it would seem that there was need of caution in dealing with the agitated country, and when the rebel had been tracked to his last stronghold even the fierce commander-in-chief was glad to secure a victory without bloodshed through the means of that woman of Tekoah who spoke to him from the wall. Joab, it is evident, did not despise the mediation of a mother in Israel. He had himself employed the same means in former times. And it is a curious instance of the singular mixture of respect and disrespect with which women were treated in these primitive times, that we see them on one page exposed to the unimaginable

careless cruelty practised by Absalom, and by almost every usurper, the last affront that could be offered to a deposed monarch without any consideration of the immediate victims; and on the next find a woman negotiating for her city, describing herself with the confidence of an assured superiority as "one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel." "A mother in Israel." The same anomaly, however, still exists in the East. It is no doubt an instance of the great power of individual character in the primitive conditions of life.

There are other details of David's life into which we can scarcely enter. His conduct to the house of Saul had been hitherto almost free of reproach: but it is hard to account for the giving up of those sons of Rizpah who, nameless as they are, have found a place in everlasting remembrance from the devotion of their mother. Let it be said in qualification of his conduct that as soon as he was told of Rizpah's terrible watch he lost no time, himself an ever-mourning father, to give what consolation was possible to her misery. Otherwise, save in that other moment of trouble at the gates of Jerusalem, when poor Mephibosheth was mulcted of half his lands, he was never unfaithful to his vow to Jonathan, or allegiance to his early patron. The troubles of Saul were of his own seeking. David was not the origin of any of them, but throughout, with these exceptions, bore himself with magnanimity and generosity of the most chivalrous kind.

And towards Israel he seems never to have failed, unless in those mysterious numberings of the people—the repeated census, which seems harmless enough to us, and was so evident a suggestion of legislation: yet which were in some strange way imputed to him as offences against God. At all events they cannot in any way be considered a transgression of morals. He

made his people great, he welded the tribes together as never had been done before, and made a united kingdom of the differing clans and districts which had been so apt each to fall into a little local centre of its own. He turned the little Jebusite city into a capital, distinct in the history of the world, and to be renowned through all time. It was he in whose fertile mind first rose the conception of that great Temple, which was one of the marvels of the ancient world. And whatever the caviller and critic may say in the uncertain, often mistaken, constantly superseded suggestions of their science, which at the best cannot be more than conjecture, there can surely be no evidence half so weighty as the tradition of his race and the internal witness of these noble poems, against his character as a poet. After thousands of years even his words, the expressions of feeling which belong to his life rather than to his works, his wail for Absalom, his remonstrances with Saul—come to our lips still as the expression of our deepest emotions. And no other poet, not even Shakespeare, has entered so deeply into the hearts of all men. The race of mankind has "considered the heavens" for all these centuries, yet has never found anything so magnificent to say of them as the words in which the shepherd of Bethlehem, the King of Israel, described the sun as coming like a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing like a giant to run his race. The astronomer may tell us that the sun does not move, that the description is inaccurate, just as the philologist tells us, but on far inferior evidence, that the Psalm is the interpolation of some nameless scribe. But the astronomer is a fool for his pains: for to us mortals as long as we live under the conditions of earth, the sunrise and the sunset are as certain as our own existence. And the moon and the stars which God has ordained, which are the Divine language by which day

unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge, are to us as they were to the ancient singer, the lamps of heaven, the lights of this little earth—of which we are not more sure in our advanced knowledge that it is but an atom in boundless space, than he felt it to be in his sublime ignorance when he cried in the midst of that overwhelming glory "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" What Newton, what Herschel could say more?

Thus said David, if the evidence of the most carefully preserved records in the world are not altogether without truth: and if, what is more infallible still, the indications of true literary criticism, the truth to nature, the accord of those great lyrics with the occasions of a much troubled life, are not without truth—which latter we believe to be impossible, even should there be any weakness in the tradition. The story and the song illustrate each other, and give and take a mutual interest. They show David to us as a man ready to the touch of every emotion, open to all nature, moved, like the harp upon which he played, by every breath, pouring forth his complaints, his adorations, his triumphs, the depths of his soul on the frequent occasions when that fervent soul was deeply affected, with a voice which is now like the softest air of heaven and now like the storm that rends the rocks; and in which no note is false, whether it is that which celebrates the springs that run among the hills, and the birds that sing in the branches—or that which declaims the grandeur of Him who flies upon the wings of the wind. This great singer, this impetuous, impassioned prince, this man whose voice is as distinct and far more magnificent than that of any contemporary we know, proves his own reality by every sign of genius and life.

The man after God's own heart! to many this has

been a wonder and stumbling-block, remembering Uriah and all that wild and terrible story. It is no excuse to say that it is a story which would never have been remembered or thought of in the history of any other Eastern king, who probably would have bow-stringed Nathan for his remonstrance and thought no more of it. But great as that sin was, it was bitterly expiated. The severest judge could not have desired a more terrible punishment for the worst criminal than the stormy history of these few years in David's house, the tragedies of Amnon and of Absalom, the flight and return of the father-king who could not draw his old sword, the sword of Goliath, against his son, and was not permitted to mourn for him. To follow him in his triumph as he rode back through Jerusalem, received with acclaim, every gay carpet and garment hung out, the whole city shining with joy and welcome: and Joab behind him, the murderer of his boy, great Joab, the greatest warrior of his day, the most successful general, with a stern eye upon the king lest his smile should fail, and the outcry of his heart break forth: and not to fling himself on David's side, to take the part of that sufferer, is impossible, we think, to any sympathetic reader. But in all this, as we say, he took his punishment like a man—if we except, perhaps, that moment when his courage gave way altogether at the sight of Absalom in rebellion, and he fled in what seems like an undue and humiliating panic from Jerusalem, a panic which the recollection of Nathan's message years before, mingled with the pang of so unnatural a pursuit, can alone account for. It is evident that this, too, was an element in a character so full of the play of human emotion, so sensitive to love, so doubly sensitive to hate. His first flight from Saul has the same element of panic in it, a sense of the intolerable, as if life were over for the man against

whom his own familiar friend, his almost father in one case, his favourite son in the other, had turned. In both cases that quick overwhelming movement and sudden despair has something cowardly in them to our more self-restrained and impulse-concealing race.

But it is this very play of feeling which makes him so full of attraction, so supreme in the affections of his surroundings, that the historian translates his charm and fascination of nature by that superlative phrase. His life is a poem from beginning to end, not a point in it which does not touch the spectator. His early youthful imaginative valour, that quintessence of boyish daring which made of him at once, fresh from the sheep-folds, a hero, and prince among his people: the love that sprung into life everywhere on the appearance of the beautiful youth, half wondering, half adoring, the love of the fickle Michal, and the faithful Jonathan—and scarcely less the unjust and bitter hatred produced by no act of his, the jealous dread of Saul's moody spirit: the cruel reverses that followed his good fortune, the wanderings in the desert, the drama of that roving life, the magnanimity and chivalric generosity of his conduct to the king: every incident as it occurs leads on the imagination as through the most perfect composition of romance. The extraordinary vitality and activity of thought and emotion which never flag, the hasty succession of great impulses, with the occasional break of a withdrawal equally hasty, as when overwhelmed by awe he leaves the Ark on the way, and hurries home disappointed in imaginative alarm and distress, all carry us along with him in a rush of sympathy and interest. The story of Bathsheba breaks in with a sudden violent light of passion into the tale, the keenest flash of illumination surrounded by the most sombre shadows. When it is over, that sudden tragedy, we see the sinner prostrate in

the dust, unresistant, self-condemned, without a thought of excuse or apology. Neither does his historian put forth for him any plea. And then the unquenchable life springs up again and a hundred projects throb and quicken in his brain. A splendid city, the joy of the whole earth—a still more splendid house of God: and then again the pause, the crushing disappointment, the quick recovery. A man of impulse throughout, obeying in hot haste the ideas, almost always generous and noble, that crowd into his mind, the quick inspirations of a great genius—there is a spontaneousness, an unconsciousness, a warm spring of nature in everything about him which is an unfailing delight. He is a perfect impersonation of humanity, so genuine a man all through, so unguarded, so little given to any arrangement of circumstances or calculation of self-interest (notwithstanding the quick eye of Eastern policy, which could not overlook a visible advantage) that the imagination is never weary of him. An erring man with hot and unruly passions, a hasty soul plunging into many snares, a father how foolish, how fond, how over-trusting! Yet with a splendour of force and purpose in him which carried all before it, not to speak of that stubborn and dark-browed Joab behind, who opposed and bullied and remonstrated, yet always with a fierce devotion, fascinated and held captive through all disapproval and opposition.

David returned, no doubt, after this terrible break in his life to all his occupations, and specially to his plans and designs for the Temple which he was not to build: and procured himself a little distraction, let us hope, from sadder thoughts, in overlooking the artists from Tyre as they devised decorations and embellishments, perhaps suggesting himself, adding a rough sketch, an idea for the carving of a capital, for the wreathed flowers

of a cornice; or arranging with Asaph and his men the service that was to be, the chorus and antiphon, the adagio and allegro of the music, and how to fit to its primitive strain the verses which critics tell us are so rude and ill-adapted for music, of his primitive Hebrew —which nevertheless must have been the best Hebrew going in that day or long after, as it has ranked among the noblest poetry going through all the centuries since then. But a chill would seem to have come over that bright spirit in his later years. It is no strain of the imagination to believe that it was said in Jerusalem of the king that after the death of Absalom he never held up his head again. How often have such words been said! Calamity comes, death comes into his house, when a man is still in full vigour, his eye not dim, nor his natural force abated: and soon every bystander will tell you with shaken head and bated breath, that he has never held up his head again. It is true that in those thanksgivings for delivery in which the entire assembly took part, those who had unthreaded the rude eye of rebellion, and those who came up when all the trouble was over to congratulate the king—there is no diminution of energy or force. Perhaps the very heat and passion of his grief made it more possible to him to keep up in this way the fictitious joy which Joab and policy insisted upon in his return to his capital. And it must have been a relief for the sorely wounded father to put the blame upon Ahithophel and other evil counsellors, and to exult with stern delight in their overthrow. How the air of Jerusalem must have rung again, and what a shout passed over the valley when the choirs answering to each other poured forth their song!

"The Lord is my rock,
And my fortress,
And my deliverer;

"In Him will I trust:
He is my shield,
And the horn of my salvation,
My refuge, and my tower.

"I will call upon the Lord,
Worthy to be praised:
So shall I be saved from mine enemies.

"The waves of death compassed me about,
The floods of ungodly men
Made me afraid;

"The sorrows of hell compassed me about;
The snares of death
Stood in my way;

"In my distress I called upon the Lord,
And cried unto my God:
And He heard my voice,
And my cry entered into His ears."

"I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them;
I have consumed them, and wounded them:
Yea, they are fallen under my feet.

"For Thou hast girded me with strength for the battle:
Them that rose up against me
Hast Thou subdued under me.

"Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth,
I did stamp them as the mire of the street,
And spread them abroad as the dust before the wind."

"For who is God,
Save the Lord?
And who is a rock,
Save our God?

"God is my strength and power:
He maketh my way perfect,
And my feet swift as the hinds'.

"He teacheth my hands to war;
So that the bows of steel are broken
He setteth me in my high place.

"The Lord liveth;
And blessed be my Rock;
And exalted be the God
Of my salvation."

With such strains as these the Levites answered to each other in their companies, and the harps and the psalteries thrilled the air, while the king in his high place, and the warriors fresh from battle stood by, and the concourse of the women, a many-coloured crowd, moved and murmured through the courts outside, around the folded curtains which concealed the Ark, the symbol of God's protecting presence and of so many victories past. But David though he gave expression to this cry of triumph went back mirthless to his house with death in his heart.

One great public ceremonial still remained in the life of David. It had probably become apparent to all that in the tumultuous state of the king's house, to avoid the inevitable struggle that must come afterwards, it was necessary that he should solemnly select and appoint his successor. How it was that the choice fell on Solomon, whether because of his intrinsic qualities or from the special love borne by his father to Bathsheba, there is no mention in any of the histories: but in Chronicles it is fully related as the immediate choice of God and for a particular end. He was far down in the list of the king's sons, but it may well have been that the boy's natural greatness and superiority to the host of ordinary young men about him was already apparent to all, though that has seldom been an effectual argument with men. At all events upon whatever ground the choice was made, the alleged reason for it was distinctly that of the great Temple that had to be built and for which Solomon had been indicated as the builder. In the solemn assembly of all his chiefs and people which David held for the purpose of this selection, there is no mention of wars abroad or legislation at home, but solely of the house of the Lord which was to be the great glory of the Hebrew race. "David assembled all the

princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and the captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem." He called together, as we should say, the great officials of the kingdom, his ministers, the heads of departments, his privy-councillors and officers in high command, the great men of the nation, with the military element preponderating as was natural—and presented to them his young son, most probably to the great surprise of many, and no doubt to the dismay and confusion of the elders of the family, and especially of Adonijah who was now the firstborn, after the death of Absalom. The king himself would seem to have felt that an explanation was necessary of this choice. When he rose to address that assembly he reminded them how he himself had been selected for the royal dignity: first Judah "chosen to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He liked me to make me king over Israel." Among the assembly there must have been many who remembered well the place which David had held in his father's house: and all present were of course aware that he was the youngest, and that his elder brothers had served submissively in his army after the first shock of his high distinction over them. When he had thus established the antecedent, he set forth before them the reason of his choice, which was that Solomon had been elected by God to build His house.

It would seem that this house of God must have become by this time an object of enthusiasm with Israel, as well as with the king. They had all known his desire

and his disappointment, and the promise that had been made to him: and the object had become a national one, kept always before the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the provincial visitors to the capital by the immense preparations which David was making, the hewing of the great blocks of stone, the carvings which were intended for the interior, the treasures of gold and silver which were laid up for the decoration of that wonderful place. Jerusalem must have been pervaded with the odour of the cedar which was measured and piled up in masses of fragrant planks and pillars: and throughout all Israel the women must have been at work wherever there was one who was skilful in embroidery, on some vestment or curtain. Thus it was carried through every rank of the people, whose pride it was to be, a great national work, an undertaking in which every man should have his share. David told his parliament how he had been hindered because he was a man of war with blood on his hands, from this sacred work, and how God had said "Solomon shall build me an house." One can imagine the interest, the profound attention of the assembly. The elders among them would feel with David the poignant disappointment that the great work was not to be in their day, but also that profound Eastern sentiment of satisfaction in the establishment and continuance of their race, which was doubly secured by the promise that their sons should carry it out. And another promise was involved, one that must have shed balm to the farthermost corner of the land, that there should be peace upon Israel. Solomon was to be no man of war like his father, but a king of peace. He was to have rest from his enemies. The younger men among the captains might hear the news without satisfaction, thinking of promotion arrested, and no further spoils to bring home, but what balm the elder envoys would carry back with them to

the depths of the country, what encouragement to every industry, what comfort to every heart! "I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days: for his name shall be Solomon." It was in itself a promise and assurance to make the harassed land rejoice.

When the king had made this oration he showed to his assembled counsellors the preparations he had made, the masses of hewn stone all ready for the building, the treasury full of precious metals, the jewels, onyxes and glistening "stones of divers colours" and marble in abundance, and gold to overlay the walls of that precious house that was to be. He showed them what had been the work of all his later life, his collections of every kind, the results of endless labour and thought. And fired as they must have been by the sight and by his glowing words, and invitation to all to take their part in this great national undertaking, the princes and the chiefs brought in their turn whatever they had that was precious to add to the store, jewels no doubt from many a source, taken from the necks of many a captive, carpets of glorious colours, embroideries upon which the women at home had spent their patient lives. The wife working in the cool of the day at the tent door or on the steps of her house had her share like her lord. There was a national contribution "offered willingly" from all the chiefs and the head men, and the treasuries of the unbuilt Temple were filled to overflowing.

This was the last great public act of David's life. He set his favourite project splendidly on foot, and settled the succession of his kingdom, and made every arrangement for the splendour of the age to come; and then the princes dispersed—the parliament was closed, the keys turned on the stores. Solomon went back to the quietude and training of his youth, and David to such care of his

kingdom as his advancing age permitted: and then came that pause which occurs continually in every history, the interval of every day between the past and future, which happily has no record, which is only our human life.

Almost the last stage of all seems to have been reached in David's life, when another sudden disturbance came upon the capital, dispersing the somewhat heavy and ominous calm which hung over it, the weary suspense of an ending life. David was old, shut up in his chamber under the charge of his young nurse, unable for the weight of sovereignty, and rarely seen, we may believe, in the city of which he was the life and pride: and all men had grown weary of the waiting, the pause in those celebrations and solemnities which held the national life together. Solomon after his solemn selection as the heir must have fallen back into the quiet and occupied no prominent place: and it is no wonder if the eldest of David's surviving sons, the legitimate heir according to our modern ideas, a mature man in the full force of life, deeply wounded and indignant no doubt by that choice of a younger brother, an untried boy, to occupy his place, should have made an attempt to recover his natural rights. Adonijah was the next in succession after Absalom, a "goodly man" like his brother, although of less strength, fibre, and passion than he whom his father lamented so deeply. And for the first time Joab, a man who understood no such changes from the right of nature, who probably had an angry scorn for the woman who had been the cause of so much harm, and resented the elevation of her son: and to whom all those promises of peace and the dream of the new Temple, and all the wasteful preparations for it, were an offence: turned against the master to whom he had been so rude an adviser often, but always so true a servant. Yet probably he made it out to himself as no turning against David but rather in his interest

as well as that of the nation, to set aside the foolishness of his old age, and establish a successor after him who should follow the old conquering traditions, and continue the old warlike life. What was this boy Solomon that he should be chosen from among the lowest ranks of the family, over the head of the gallant prince who was the true heir? Abiathar was of the same mind, the priest who had been faithful to David through all his troubles, who had been with him in the wilderness, and among the Philistines, sharing all the evil as well as the good of his life. It is very probable that even among the priesthood there were two parties, one maintaining that a tabernacle for the Ark was all that God had ordained, that the Temple was but a dream, and all the silver and gold more fit to be divided among the chiefs and people than to be appropriated to this visionary use. To what purpose is this waste? Probably both Joab and Abiathar conceived that it would be far more to the glory of Israel to diffuse such wealth among the people than to accumulate it in this one place, and alienate it from the use of man in order to appropriate it to that of God, to whom it was as the dust of the field. And Adonijah was the legitimate heir. They were the true royalists, the legitimists of their day, the Conservatives, or rather the Tories, of Israel, determined against all innovations. And there is no doubt that they had much reason on their side as well as force, with the high priest and the commander-in-chief at their head, while David dozed over the fire in his chamber in the chill and lethargy of his old age. They might easily conclude that they were delivering him, too, from the plotters about him, from the influence of Bathsheba and Nathan, who had procured the elevation of that other young pretender to the throne.

These great leaders, however, reckoned without their king. He was old, older than his years, for he scarcely

seems to have been more than seventy, which is by no means invariably an age of decrepitude. And when the mother of Solomon came in breathless with the news of the great tumult in the city and the proclamation of the new king, and eager appeal to him, and reminder of his promise that her son should succeed him—followed immediately by the prophet with the same news—David roused himself at once from his lethargy and gave his directions, clear and brief, without any weakness or wavering. The king's name had fallen into no contempt it is evident in Jerusalem, the city of his own creation, for which he had done so much. And when Solomon was led forth on the king's own mule, with the heralds blowing their trumpets before him, the rebellion collapsed in a moment. It was scarcely a rebellion indeed at all. Adonijah, it would seem, was not a man to run the risk of any irremediable act, nor were Joab and Abiathar sufficiently bold to advise it. The legitimist party would seem to have broken up in the most complete confusion and panic, as if there was neither right nor reason among them. They could have had no support from the people, and no true soul even among themselves. The sound of the trumpets blowing down from the city, and the other music which accompanied them, when it reached the valley where the conspirators were assembled at Enrogel brought an immediate pause. "Wherefore is this noise of the city in an uproar?" The sudden news brought paleness to all faces and dispersed the revellers like the chaff before the wind. Joab, remembering well, no doubt, the many grievances that David had against him, was the first to disappear from the scene. David's name was stronger yet than any of their complots. The old king, the old lion roused from his doze of age, and with a gleam of long-restrained fury in his eyes, called to his bedside the son in whose favour he

had abdicated, the fortunate prince who was to build the house of God, and make Israel glorious; and while the fading fire lasted gave him a few fierce brief counsels, hot and bitter with that anger of old age which is all the more strong that it has no longer any personal potency. All that Joab had done came before him in a flash of angry recollection, the death of Abner, the death of Amasa—who can doubt, above all, the death of Absalom. "Do thou therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his head go down to the grave in peace." Was this charge so dreadful as appears to us? Joab had served David well, but he had never admitted any obstacle to his private vengeance, and he was the most dangerous foe that young Solomon could have while yet unassured upon the throne. That there should have come into the old king's mind after this his own bitter enemy and reviler, the Benjamite, who had thrown jibes and curses and stones at him on his flight from Jerusalem, is more difficult to understand. Perhaps the recollection flitted across his failing mind in the temporary fury which the name of Joab had raised. He had forgiven Shimei in order not to stain with blood the day of his return to Jerusalem: but had, perhaps, seen reason since to regret his clemency, and felt Shimei, too, to be a danger and probable enemy to the new king. Upon this subject we can only conjecture. The charge leaves a painful impression on the mind as of a man who could not in policy avenge his own quarrels, but left the legacy of blood to his son. It can only be said that not in these days nor for long centuries after had the nobler thought that injuries were to be forgiven, not avenged, been communicated to man: as also that the flicker of suddenly-raised passion through decrepitude, the last fierce impulse of a failing mind and temporary outburst of the capricious fury of an old man's shattered nerves and sinking strength is scarcely to be laid to his charge.

Here is a softer recollection, with which to take leave of the hero, the song with which the words and the days of the son of Jesse came to an end. "Now these be the last words of David"—the young king, his eyes full of ardour and of melancholy, the newly anointed, the great thinker and poet of days to come, sitting thoughtfully by.

"He that ruleth over men should be just,
Ruling in the fear of God.

"And he shall be as the light of the morning,
When the sun riseth,
A morning without clouds;

"Like the tender grass out of the earth
In the clear shining after rain.

"Although my house be not so with God;
Yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered, and sure:
This is my salvation, and my desire."

There is something extraordinarily pathetic in the old poet's comparison unspoken, of his own old and failing state with that of him who was as the light of the morning: and when we remember who that was, who was thus rising like a morning without clouds over Jerusalem, the great ruler, the most splendid and potent of all the monarchs of the East, the sage whose disillusion has pervaded the whole earth, the master and heir of all things, satisfied with none—the comparison grows more expressive still.

Thus David died, and the greatest romance of history, let us seek it in what records we will, came to an end. And Jerusalem sat solitary as another poet in still deeper affliction, proclaimed of her in after days, and mourned for her king.

CHAPTER IV.

SOLOMON.

THE traditionary character of Solomon, the greatest potentate and philosopher of the East, the man above all others who has influenced the development of that vast world of sentiment, passion and thought which the passage of centuries has scarcely made more comprehensible to us, the world of the subtle Jew and the dreamy, yet fierce Mohammedan was as different from that of his father as can well be imagined. In such wonderful figures there is certainly no heredity. How the warrior of the desert, the shepherd of the hills and valleys, the paladin and hero of romance who was his predecessor, could have produced that man of observation and thought, that great spectator of the ages, who was at the same time so great an actor on the far distant and crowded stage that it is difficult to conceive how little Judea could have contained him—is beyond the imagination of man. He rises in that dim distance the first-born of all the philosophers, arriving at conclusions which the latest have done little more than carry out: the first great thinker, whose musings have breathed through the whole world, neither corrected nor rendered obsolete by all advancing lore or increasing wisdom of mankind. What progress that race has made since then! how changed are all our conditions! there is no comparison

between the circumstances of well-being which surround the poorest among us, and those precarious and painful conditions of existence in which our own early ancestors, much more the older ages of the world, lived and died: yet beyond the rude poetry of David, and the broken thoughts of Solomon, humanity has not advanced. We express the loftiest aspirations of our hearts, and the deepest and saddest convictions of our minds, in their unchanged words to-day. Useless to attempt to examine whether that poetry and those thoughts are but traditionary of these two names, upon which subject we can never perhaps arrive at any certainty either on one side or the other. I have already ventured to say that when the question is between unvarying tradition (not to take refuge in any shelter of inspiration) absolute verisimilitude, the accompanying picture of the two men of whose history the Psalms and the Poem of Ecclesiastes are illustrations—and the researches of a small sect of German philologists, I prefer to take the word of the older ages. Since anyhow it must be a matter of faith in any case, the evidence on the one side is, I think, infinitely more trustworthy than that on the other. But to the reader who thinks that David had no share, even in the Psalms, which illustrate his life; and that not Solomon, but some nameless sage is the author of Ecclesiastes, what can be said? No more, I think, than can be said to the man who believes that Lord Bacon and not William Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*. This theory scarcely diminishes the antiquity to our ken, and much increases the wonder of those surpassing productions of genius. They come to us from the dimness of a distance which there is no means of penetrating, and remain still the earliest utterances of humanity, as they are so far as we are aware, upon their chief subjects, almost its final word. Our ancestors in Scotland falsified

history and invented, to their own glory, a whole line of visionary kings: but how far are they behind the splendid fictionists (according to the critics) who flourished nameless among those primitive Jews! for Scots historians put no immortal poetry into the mouth of their fabulous Fergus, no essence of human wisdom to the credit of any Achaius. Solomon and his philosophy, and David and his Psalms on the contrary are rooted among the deepest certainties of the wide Eastern world which brought them forth.

Solomon the man of rest is a new personality altogether in primitive history. He rises out of that tumultuous, yet vague, tribe of David's sons without any right of priority, nay with almost the reverse, with, one would have imagined, a prejudice against him as the son of the woman who had caused the darkest tragic episode in David's life, chosen by God in the exercise of a selection which, to our thinking, might almost be called arbitrary, the same which took not only David from the sheep-cotes, but Mohammed from among the camel drivers, and Dante from the Florentine bourgeoisie, and Shakespeare from the actors of a primitive theatre, to make of them unheralded, unexpected, no better than their neighbours, the instructors of a world. We are not told even that Solomon was a "goodly man" to predispose Jerusalem to receive him as she had tentatively received his elder brothers. When he was led along the stony streets upon his father's mule, with all its royal trappings, the trumpets sounding before him, and, of all the captains of Israel, only stout Benaiah behind, to where the Ark within its tent stood awaiting the house in which he was to enclose it, we may well imagine how the throngs in the city, the men gathering in irresolute bands, the women at every window and doorway, stood open-mouthed, not knowing for the moment which side

to take. Adonijah's guests, in all their bravery, had gone by but a few hours before to the great feast in the valley which the splendid heir-presumptive, the legitimate successor, was giving—and what was this young prince, the man of peace, undistinguished yet by either valour or greatness?

The crowd must have gathered dumbly after him, pouring down to the door of the tabernacle. But when the priest came out from within the mysterious curtains with the consecrated oil, and in the sight of all men anointed the grave young king, a sudden enthusiasm would seem to have seized the crowd. The sound of the uproar in the city blew downward upon the wind to the cool margin of that well in the valley where Adonijah sat with his guests. There was a moment, no doubt, of consternation, of varying and panic-stricken thoughts, of pale faces: and then the assembly melted hurriedly away. Evidently the sound of those shouts was absolutely convincing, and every man recognised that there was in David's legitimate heir no stamina to stand against the young usurper of his rights. Not so was Absalom ever abandoned. Joab for once disappeared without a word to say.

It was no easy heritage which David left to his successor. All the schemes of the harem were against him, the influence of the priest Abiathar, still more the influence of the commander-in-chief:—and no doubt the prejudices of all the military section of the people whose prosperity depended upon war and plunder rather than upon peace and the arts of peace. The summary manner in which he got rid of the competitor to the throne, and of that obdurate and powerful Joab, whose unresisting end strikes us with amazement after the masterful life in which he had carried everything with so high a hand—must, however, have proved at once to all Jeru-

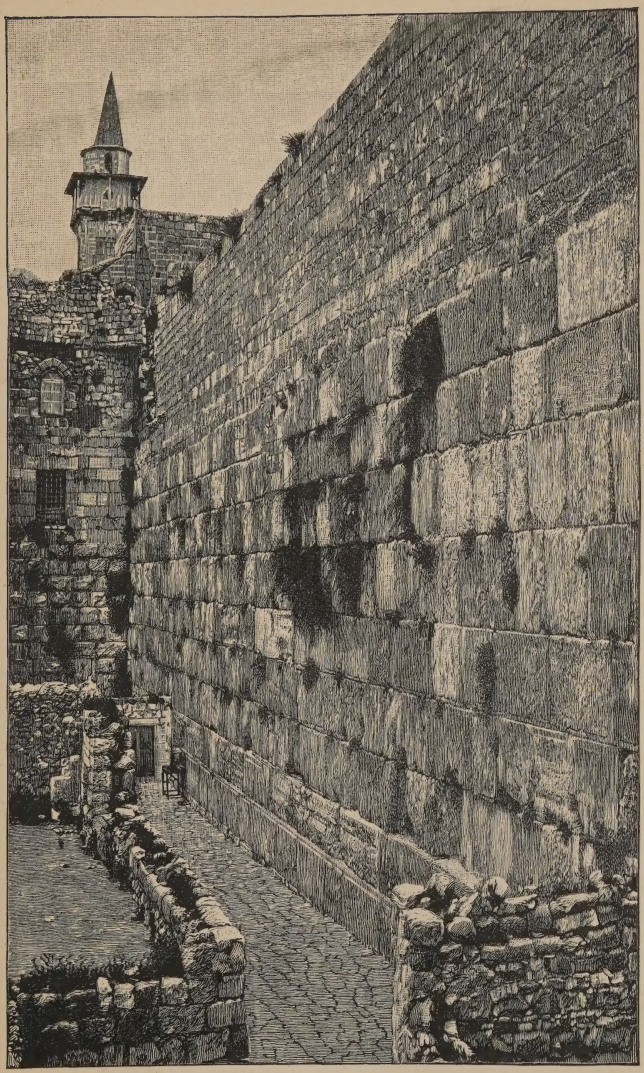
salem looking on, that this new king though a man of peace was not one to be trifled with or from whom any weakness of clemency and toleration was to be expected. The man of thought was also a man of action, prompt, trenchant, and decided. No doubt it was policy which led him to make a round of the ancient high places from which he was about to take all the importance, and specially to that in Gibeon where the ancient tabernacle of the wilderness, the tent in which the Ark had been originally sheltered, with all its old-world ornamentations, still stood, and the huge altar of brass upon which sacrifices had been offered from the earliest days of the national life. It would conciliate the people round, perhaps startled by the idea that there was henceforward to be but one centre of national worship in Israel to the discredit of their own ancient shrine, that one of the first acts of the new king should be to visit and offer innumerable sacrifices upon that altar. It is curious to realise what an accompaniment to every religious service must have been that odour of burning, the heavy smoke and smell of the sacrifices, so much of them as was actually consumed upon the altar, which all the incense, and the pure air of the open eminences, the high places on which these altars were generally raised, could scarcely dissimulate. The best way of doing so no doubt was that of the feast and reverent consumption "before the Lord" of the greater part of the offering: while the column of smoke ascending, so clear a symbol to the mind of the beholder of the blood and fire with which symbolically his own life, forfeit to justice, was redeemed, had its aspect of stern yet solemn poetry as well, which must have reconciled the minds of the people to this otherwise disagreeable feature of their worship. There is not a word, however, of this in all the record: no sensitive priest objected, no worshipper had a complaint to make.

The burning flesh was a sweet savour unto the Lord. Close examination, however, shows that the amount thus consumed was comparatively small, so that, perhaps, the trial to the, in this respect not very keen, perceptions of the East, might not have been nearly so great as we suppose.

The remarkable vision which was vouchsafed to Solomon in Gibeon, after he had accomplished all the rites of religion there, is both touching and impressive, although we are distinctly informed with greater emphasis than in any other instance of a similar kind, that "Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream." Yet a dream full of instruction and consolation. He was still "young and tender" according to David's description; "I am but as a little child" according to his own. And his great heart was all absorbed in the thought of that work which he had to do, inexperienced as he was, and without help or counsellor. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, that I may discern between good and evil." What more fit petition could be put forth by any monarch? It shows us better than anything else could do that sensation of awe at his own responsibilities and absolute pre-occupation with them, which is one of the most impressive aspects of royalty, and still more of royal youth. The ill-fated heir of France wept in the tremor of that awe when the news of his accession was brought to him; and well might he weep. Solomon was not of this mild nature: yet his prayer shows the fixed idea of his mind, which was not upon the splendours or greatness of his position, but on its difficulty and the dread charge thus laid upon his shoulders. "An understanding heart." We know little except in the world-renowned example called *par excellence* the judgment of Solomon which follows in the tale of the two women, of his judicial wisdom: but that he possessed the under-

standing heart in every sense of the words, his works leave no manner of doubt.

The historian would seem to have considered that one superlative instance of understanding and judgment to have been enough, as who should stop to prove a thing so spread about the world and everywhere known as the wisdom of Solomon? and leaving that transports us at once to Jerusalem to the busiest scene of activity, the very climax of life and occupation. The sheds and store-houses in which all David's wealth of preparation for the Temple were laid up, and where the armies of workmen he had employed were busy in their labours, must have been outside the gates, spread over the hollows where there would be room for all their operations, yet near enough for constant supervision. The men must have clustered like bees about the huge masses of stone which the excavators of our day have discovered with amazement deep under the rubbish of ages, the foundations of the great superstructure to come. They look as if giants alone could have hewed them and elephants dragged them to their place, though it was but the skilful masons of Tyre with their Hebrew journeymen who shaped and severed these prodigious blocks. The deep quarries in which they were hewn and shaped lay close by: and the workshops where the fine stone carvings were prepared, the furnaces of the metal-workers would all find ample place in the valley between Jerusalem and Moriah, along with the sheds for the carpenters with their piles and stacks of fragrant wood. In the city itself, no doubt, the fine work, wood-carving, and the beating out of the more precious metals into plates for the lining of the interior, and all the ornamental work, in some cases adorned with precious stones, must have been carried on, in special workshops and under close superintendence. It is apparent that all this immense



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THE WALL OF WAILING: ANCIENT WALL OF TEMPLE ENCLOSURE.

accumulation of industries must have been going on for years during the reign of David, who had set the masons to work to hew the stones, and "prepared iron in abundance for the nails, for the doors of the gates and for the joinings, and brass in abundance without weight"—not to speak of the designs minutely prepared, and the calculations of quantities and values required. How far we may trust to the numbers and statements of weight it would be difficult to say, for nothing is so likely to have suffered in the course of innumerable transcriptions as these details, which in many cases, and especially in the successive numberings of the people, seem inconceivably large for so small a territory.

What is more interesting is to realise the extraordinary stir of national life which must have been occasioned by so much employment, so much collected treasure, and the growth of trade and communication with other surrounding nations in the peaceful way of mutual use and service. Tyre, the great trading centre of the age, was brought into the closest relations to Jerusalem by this prodigious work, and bartered her cedars against the grain and oil and wine of the rich plains of Palestine, and lent her sailors to man the ships that Solomon commissioned, and set up a close alliance with those rude and warlike neighbours who were now signalising their entrance into the brotherhood of civilisation and progressive life by so great an enterprise. Then as now the Hebrews seem rather to have hired workmen and skill in manufacture than to have produced them; but already the cunning of the negotiator and merchant must have existed among them. They had long made use of tributaries, the subject villages whose population had been spared in their first inroad into Palestine, partly from weakness and partly from policy, whose descendants probably remain there to this day. And already the

future manipulators of European finance had found out the way of exchanging the productions of their vassals, the Gibeonites and Jebusites, who laboured the fields and worked the winepress and crushed the oil-berries for them, for the manufactures of the trading Tyrians, and

A CEDAR OF LEBANON.

the wonders brought from beyond the seas. This was their first introduction into those commercial affairs in which they have had so much importance since.

And thus the little hill city, built for defence upon the rocks and declivities, with strait skirts gathered about her, and a dwelling so steep that the lame and the blind were supposed able to defend her against the bold-

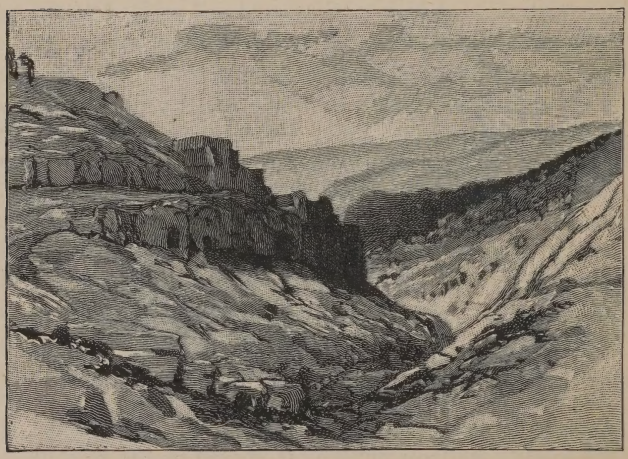
est raid, expanded in one generation into a great city enlarged and beautified, towards which the wealth of the whole country flowed, a centre of industry where every skilled workman was sure of finding employment and every manufacturer a market for his wares. The quickening of life, the new activity, the change from that restricted village fortress with jealous gates ready to close at every rumour, is too marvellous for description. Perhaps the momentary effect was not at first one of improvement. If some old Jebusite strolling forth upon the walls in the evening burst forth into outcries of indignation like the wailings of Mr. Ruskin, over the glow of the furnaces in the valley, the dust of the masons' yards, which spread everywhere, instead of the unbroken green and the breath of flowers that had been wont to breathe upward upon the evening air, who could wonder? And when scaffoldings began to rise, and deep pits of foundation to be dug, upon the green hill where heretofore the peaceful labours of Araunah's threshing-floor had been the only object which disturbed the serenity of the landscape, the cornfields below and the terraced vines, and here and there a group of feathery olives above—how hotly would the old men talk of the ravages made by the new ideas and the destruction of all that was most dear and beautiful and homelike in that once verdant and fertile scene! No more an unbroken prospect of soft swelling hills and green hollows, the Mount of Olives rising up to the skies, the Kedron purling over its pebbles in the valley below, the soft contour of Mount Moriah, one of those little hills of Judah that were like lambs, filling the centre of the scene—but all over the slopes, and in the low ravine beyond, the disfiguring workshops, the gleam of the fires, the sound of chisel and hammer, taking all the repose and sweetness out of the air! Thus the old inhabitant must have thought,

with a sigh for the good old times, when his own Jebusite chief held the little town, and all was silence around: and so, too, must have thought the group of old soldiers who would look out, contemptuous, upon all those arts of peace, and remind each other of the stirring trumpet notes when great Joab, now dead and gone, or greater David, had called them together and led them down, with clang of sword and shimmer of spear, down into the plain to victory and spoil.

But while these old Conservatives had their grumble apart, what robust life must have poured through the land where everybody was busy, what commotion and activity in all the streets! Solomon, the young king, had other tastes than his father. He made a splendid alliance with the greatest of ancient kingdoms, bringing Pharaoh's daughter to his palace on the hill, not contenting himself with any wayside beauty as his father had done—Pharaoh's daughter, a descendant of the race which had made slaves of Israel, and which had suffered so sorely by means of that strange and irreconcilable people! What greater proof could be of the new position of Israel and the final place which she had won for herself among the nations of the earth when the great King of Egypt did not despise her alliance? The Egyptian princess would come with new luxuries and splendours in her train, always adding to the rising tide of wealth and work and universal embellishment. And as the seasons went on, and year followed year, the great building growing on the hill would gradually absorb the interest of Jerusalem, a perpetual object of observation and criticism and remark, of national enthusiasm and pride. No one could look out from the windows of the palace, from the heads of the steep streets, from any housetop or rampart, without seeing before them the rising walls, the vast edifice taking shape, the great new thing

slowly growing in whiteness and noble proportion like a magic dwelling. The great stones must have been dragged up the hill with shoutings and outcries of men, and labouring breath of animals taking their share, they, too, in their voiceless way, in the offering; but once there, were poised, without noise of building, one upon another in their courses without sound of the hammer or any tool. It would become the first idea in the morning with all that highly-stimulated and excited people to look out and see how much had been done in the previous twenty-four hours, what new doorway had become visible, what sculptured lintel added, or wing of cherub, or wreath of pomegranate. And what expeditions there would be on the Sabbath Days and when the feast of the new moon gave a little break in the continuity of labour, across the valley where the forges and ateliers were for the moment silent, to see the progress of that great object which was the chief thing in life! The women must have streamed out in bands, with their veils and ornaments, to wonder and admire and point out to each other the added height since their last visit, the growth like enchantment of that house of God which was more wonderful than any dream, and the rising courses of the mighty wall surrounding it, rooted on the rock, from which, on the eastern side, they could look down upon Kedron and the deep valley winding away southward where, on the rocks of the opposite slope, the Tyrian workmen had built their low houses, half excavation, half construction, and on the quiet pool under the hill catching the glimpses of the sun—the pool and the village of Siloam. To us how full of wonderful association is that scene where the Cyclopean blocks of the ancient foundations still lie securely bedded in the rock! the Mount of Olives, that sacred hill of meditation, the road that winds along its side to little Bethany round the

corner of the hill, and deep down in the valley the old, old group of hoary trees which mark Gethsemane, that spot full of awe and anguish. But no such knowledge was in the mind of the lighthearted groups which must have leant over to see the huge courses of new-laid stones, the men explaining, the women wondering as in any holiday expedition of to-day. These blocks of deep-



VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT, WITH ROCKS OF SILOAM, THE DWELLING OF THE TYRIAN MASONS.

est antiquity, perhaps, and certainly one other silent witness, the dark mass of rock—now canopied and enshrined in one of the most exquisite pieces of Oriental building, the so-called Mosque of Omar, the Dome of the Rock—which may have been Abraham's altar, but at all events is an unchanged portion of the original hill top—are the sole existing things which saw the commotion and excitement of that day.

One other great work, a feat of engineering and con-

structive skill, must have been the bridges, the relics of which have been found within this generation, with which the deep but narrow valley between the city of David and the Mount Moriah was crossed. The Arch called Robinson's, and which is close to the most ancient portion of the Temple wall, now known as the wailing place of the Jews, where the pilgrims of that nation or residents in Jerusalem still assemble to repeat their litany of lamentation—and the other relic near the south-east corner, known as Wilson's Arch, show where those wonderful highways were. They crossed the valley something in the same way as do the bridges in Edinburgh, spanning the ravine, and making locomotion more easy than when the slope of Zion on one side and Moriah on the other had to be ascended and descended on every passage. The acclivity of Mount Moriah on which the Temple was placed was loftier than the terraced slope upon which the new town of Edinburgh is founded, but otherwise the North Bridge in that beautiful city affords a good example of what Solomon's bridges must have been. The Tyropœon valley is now filled up with masses of ruin, and houses built upon these masses, thus equalising more or less the natural level, but still the ravine is sufficiently marked and the bridge of Solomon, did it exist, would be a great solace to the weary pilgrim, who has at present to descend the precipitous street of the city and mount again long flights of steps to reach the area of the Temple, the "Noble Sanctuary" of the Mohammedans, to whom it is, as to us, though from different reasons, with one exception the most sacred spot on earth.

It was not upon the Temple alone, however, that Solomon, though it was his special mission, spent all his thoughts. He would seem to have organised every kind of industry and trade. His merchants, our authorised version tells us, brought him "yarn out of Egypt," but

this seems based upon a mistaken translation, and it appears that it was troops of horses which his messengers brought, and chariots which hitherto had been rare in Judea, the strongest arm of military service. He "made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones," filling the country with work and money, and the perpetual coming and going of commerce. This it would seem could not be done without a certain oppression of the people, corvées as in France, forced labour and interference with personal liberty in order to swell the greatness of the king and kingdom. The appeal of the elders of Israel in the succeeding age to Rehoboam to ease them of the grievous yoke which his father had put upon them no doubt refers to this, a natural expedient of the time, too common among the other races to be remarked, though always resented by the fierce and wayward independence of the Israelites. There is, however, no trace of resistance or discontent while Solomon's powerful hand held the reins of state. His great alliances, his great undertakings, the links of profit and mutual interest which he formed between himself and all the surrounding peoples, fully fulfilled the promise of his first years that he should be a man of peace and have rest from his enemies; but yet he was no soft or effeminate prince, altogether absorbed in the arts of peace. He would seem to have extended the boundaries of Israel on all sides, and specially to have completed the subjugation of those remnants of the original people, the ancient Canaanitish races which the invading tribes had not the strength, perhaps, let us hope, had not the heart to drive out of their cities. Neither did Solomon drive them out; he made of them useful servants, sometimes indeed not much more than slaves, doing the hard work to which the proud Hebrews would not bow their neck, quarrying in the stony depths of the hills, and dragging the loads

of stones, the cargoes of wood from Jaffa, all the ruder labours necessary. The number of these original inhabitants, sometimes holding their own in spurts of little wars, as the Jebusites had held their town against David, sometimes tolerated and linked by bonds of familiarity and neighbourhood with the conquering race, never so oppressed as were, for example, the Saxons by the Normans,

YAMUCH, A PORT OF LEBANON.

was evidently greater than we have any idea of, and continued to represent a distinct element in the population for centuries, preventing at all times the perfect homogeneity of the inhabitants of Judea and the land of Israel, and the full realisation of the promise. That a great part of the hard work of Solomon's buildings fell upon their shoulders is evident, and as the use of horses was a new thing, and the roads little adapted for any cartage, all the heavy loads of material must have been carried to Jerusalem either by mules or camels or by the work of

man. Neither mules nor camels could carry conveniently the great logs of cedar, still less drag forth the blocks of stone from the quarries, therefore it must in some cases have been by sheer hard labour of scores of men that the transport was accomplished. All this heavy work would seem to have been laid upon the tributaries, the aborigines of the country. "Of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen," but the Amorites, Hittites, Perrizites, Hivites, and Jebusites were levied *en masse* for this forced service. The corvée would lose its unpopularity when thus exacted from the natural vassals, and it does not appear that any rebellious sentiment arose among those labouring crowds. The Israelites filled their places of overseers and captains, and they were sent to Lebanon, to the wood-cutting, in relays, their period of service being one month in three.

How far all this quickened life and increase of work and activity was to the real advantage and enrichment of the land, however, it is very difficult to decide. A splendid capital is a glory to a well established and stedfastly governed kingdom, but it is doubtful whether the Israelites were sufficiently tamed and civilised to appreciate it, or whether the distant shores of Zebulon and Naphtali, the outlying tribes of Gad and Dan would care much for what went on upon the heights of that far-off Jerusalem. The inhabitants of these regions were described as "people that walked in darkness" so much later as the times of Isaiah, and it is scarcely possible to imagine that they could have felt a great interest in the buildings at Jerusalem, for the sake of which they were called upon to join the band of labourers, which made its way every month through their country to Lebanon, unless indeed it might be sweetened by pay and reward as is doubtful. Yet even that train, travelling in its detachments under its officers, increased by contributions from every tribe,

must have caused a thrill of life and mutual acquaintance through all the tribes as it went and came, with its new experiences, so much to tell of Jerusalem on one hand, and of the mountains on the other: not to speak of the wonders of the caravans from Egypt, the reports of the shipmen who went so far into fabulous lands across incredible seas. The country folk must have looked for the passing of that train with all the excitement of rustics to whom a glimpse into other worlds is thus afforded periodically. It is said in our own days that nothing has so welded the newly formed kingdom of Italy into one, as the military service which carries the Neapolitan into the cities of the north, and makes the hardheaded Piedmontese acquainted with Rome and Sicily, revealing on all sides, to the astonishment of the narrow rustic or narrower citizen, the unity of a great country, the Patria which is something greater than the *paese* to which all his thoughts have been limited. These journeys to Lebanon and mutual occupation about one great work which was for the glory of all Israel must, one would imagine, have had a similar effect. And the continual passage of merchandise and caravans could not but enrich the peasants who furnished food for man and beast to the wandering traders and their little army of camels and mules. It is possible, of course, that the king's lavish expenditure on his buildings might excite the discontent, especially of his subjects at a distance: but scarcely credible that the increased movement and stir of life and trade should not have benefited all.

Still more certain advantage must have been in the reconstruction of ancient cities, the acquisition of new, in which colonies of Hebrews could be placed, and the boundaries of their sway enlarged. It seems very doubtful what is meant by "Tadmor in the wilderness"—which has been generally taken to be Palmyra, far away

among the wilds, far beyond Damascus, which for a great part of Solomon's reign was unfriendly to him—unless indeed his workmen had attained so great proficiency, both the Tyrian experts and their Hebrew pupils, that they were sought for in their turn as Hiram's workmen had been sought for, to form the mighty columns and lay the prodigious stones of these wonderful temples and palaces. It is now, however, considered more probable that the desert on the other side, between Egypt and Judea, is the wilderness indicated. But the narrative is full of undertakings nearer home, "cities of stone," "cities for his chariots and cities for his horsemen," the primitive vagueness of description revealing, if nothing else, a universal activity and the continual addition of new centres of occupation and life. Still more wonderful is the glimpse into immensity afforded by those ships which Solomon is said to have built on the shores of the Red Sea, with their Tyrian captains and overseers and Hebrew seamen, sailing away into the unknown, a long uncertain three years' voyage, to the mysterious land of Ophir, the wonderful ancient Arabia or India whence gold and precious stones and sweet-smelling sandal-wood, and, perhaps, some rare knowledge of inlaying and fine works in ivory and gold, were brought. What were the exchanges the subtle Hebrews, with their natural turn for finance, would offer? What could they bring that was not already more plentiful in a world so overflowing with primitive wealth? Perhaps the wool and woven stuffs, the embroideries of the women of Israel, the carpets and the cloths of goat's hair, the primitive furnishings of the tents. The Venetians in their day, so much later, exported salt-fish and wooden bowls and spoons, insignificant articles enough to purchase the treasures of the East, but yet no doubt answering to necessities still more imperative than any need of luxury could be. The

record does not enter into these details. The voyages themselves are wonder enough, the earliest record of extended trading and the navigation of the unknown seas. And even the briefness of the statement adds to its interest. What strange novelty, unknown to us, who have so little left to surprise us, what excitement must have been in that vague blundering about those brilliant seas, what tragic experiences of cyclone and tempest, what loitering in strange places, waiting upon wind and weather, in the long, long wandering of those three years!

Was the Queen of Sheba, that mysterious and legendary princess, the only royal visitor that came in her time out of the invisible to see the great king whose emissaries had stirred the mists that veiled one part of the world from the other? She is, at least, the only one that makes a visible appearance in the record, with her offerings and her great train "the camels that bore spices and very much gold and precious stones." Over what deserts had she come to see the wonders of art and hear the words of wisdom that had reached her in distant echoes so far away: or was she one of the passengers in the returning ships, taking advantage of those wonderful pioneers in the unknown seas? This, of course, we shall never know, nor who the lady was who showed so great an appreciation of wisdom, nor even what was the foundation of fact in the legend, to which its picturesqueness gives an importance which it scarcely has in the record.

How was it that this petty king, lord of a little land, no bigger than Wales, filled the world with his greatness? How was it that his temple, which some of the critics of the present day describe as a small edifice (*édicule* M. Renan calls it) not much more than a royal chapel, should remain down to these times, after the passage of nearly three thousand years, in the imagination and

memory of the later ages, the symbol of everything that is splendid and vast in architecture and in riches? The same critics tell us that in Solomon's time there was a rage for building temples, and that all the little nations were doing it, raising sanctuaries for their worship far more imposing than that of Solomon. How is it then that all of these have crumbled and departed, not only their ancient walls—which is natural—but all memory and knowledge of them—while still the Temple on Mount Moriah shines, where it stood three thousand years ago, in the recollection of men? The great temples of Egypt still stand in solemn ruin, which were far more vast and more splendid still, yet we have but the faintest understanding of them. Neither Tyre nor Sidon nor even Egypt have sustained the remorseless destructions that have swept over the holy place of the Jews: and yet they are all gone into uttermost darkness, while the other remains triumphant over time and all its revenges. The vast blocks of stone that recent excavators have laid bare fill us with a wondering awe: but not upon them is founded the everlasting memory which makes the Temple of Solomon as real to us as St. Peter's at Rome, or our own minsters and abbeys which our eyes have seen. The temples of the Greeks are so much later that they are almost modern in comparison, and their visible and splendid ruins are still wonderful in their decay: but Solomon's Temple stands only in recollection, in a history which has been a hundred times rent to pieces, and which many a critic has fondly believed himself to have discredited for ever: yet it stands as firm as when it was built, a thing for reverence and admiration till the end of time. One asks one's self why? And how is it that the heart of the nineteenth century sobs forth its anguish in the words so called of David and breathes over all earthly ways the sigh which bears the name of

Solomon? Those to whom these potentates of the ancient ages are the insignificant and half fabulous kings of an obscure people must answer after their fashion. To the rest of us the explanation is sufficiently clear.

It is needless to touch here upon the immense place which Solomon occupies in the imagination of the East, or the mass of stories and incidents, many no doubt quite fabulous, which have collected about his name. That Mohammed should have adopted him with so much fervour and faith is a proof of his legendary importance among the peoples which were not his own, but which had been already pervaded for ages by the reports and echoes of his wisdom and his greatness. But we may with more reason add to the brief record of his story the other productions, still more lasting than the Temple, which bear his name. "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" has been represented by some writers as a popular ballad of his time, setting forth how a certain beautiful maiden of low degree clung to the shepherd of her choice and scorned the advances of the king, a suggestion so completely foreign to the character of the poem, in any natural interpretation, that we leave it to those who can be persuaded into such a theory. By others this poem, as well as Ecclesiastes, is supposed to be the production of some anonymous poet of a much later date, who, more disinterested than modern poets are, extinguished himself in order to place the name of Solomon on his work, for what reason it would be difficult to imagine. It would have been as easy to have placed the name of the real author and his description at the head of the poem as that of "the Preacher, the Son of David," and more gratifying to natural instinct, which never since has reached this height of self-abnegation. Men have been found in numbers to give their lives for their kings, to abandon comfort, and happiness, and

wealth for their sakes, but never once as in this case to give up to them the dearer fame of poem or work of genius. Such a piece of self-effacement is unknown to any other language, to any race that ever existed. No Greek gave the credit even of a ballad to the tyrant of his state, or cut off his own name from the admiration and knowledge of posterity in order to give fictitious glory to his master. On what inducement the poets of Judea in the dawn of consciousness should have done so, why they were so far different (being so curiously like in other particulars the most tenacious and self-seeking of men) to all other human beings, is too deep a question for the ordinary intelligence. We prefer to receive them, as at least from the inspiration of Solomon, whether they may have been written out or not, by his own hand. We are told that "he spake" of many things upon which his utterances have perished: beasts and birds, and trees and plants. The botany and natural history, curious as they would have been, we can do without. The greater treasure has been preserved for us.

The Song of Solomon has never had fair play, if we may use such a word with the modern reader. Its strange misplacement (according to all nature and analogy) in the sacred canon, the wonderful efforts that have been made to twist its fervent strophes into a spiritual meaning, and the strain of everything that is natural and seemly, as appears to me, in the effort, has given a false character to the poem from which it is difficult to disengage the imagination. This, I am aware, is a very bold thing for the unlearned to say, and I venture to say it only as one of the unlearned, and according to mere literary instinct, no more. When we treat it frankly as what it is "a song of loves" it becomes one of the most interesting relics of literature, the oldest of love-songs, a little cantata, half lyrical, half dramatic, of the happy meetings,

the temporary estrangements, the mutual adoration of the youthful pair, more beautiful to each other than anything else on earth, and eager to prove to the world around each, the superlative attraction of his or her choice. The slight setting of the contemporary life by which the lovers are surrounded, is clear as a picture. There are the streets, the watchmen that go about the city, the keepers of the walls, the silence of the night into which the lady strays who has lost her love; there is the spring awaking over all the fields, the call of the lover to his love to come forth, like Corinna to the Maying. "The flowers appear; the time of the singing of birds has come, the voice of the dove is heard in the land." There is the beloved at the window seeking entrance, going "down" to his garden, to the beds of spices, to the gardens of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and the budding of the pomegranates, to gather lilies; or he comes swift in his ardour over the mountains like a roe or a young hart, or out of the wilderness "like pillars of smoke," clouds of dust rising round the swiftness of his coming. Whether it was the daughter of Pharaoh who describes herself as "black but comely" while her lover lavishes upon her every adoring attribute, or whether the Shulamite was one of the many other loves with which the king surrounded himself, who can tell? Who indeed can tell anything certain about this earliest of love-songs? Its broken canticles, its hyperbole of Eastern detail, its love-longing and wistfulness of pursuit, the constant eluding of the supreme meeting which is the very soul of the love-song, are perfect in their Oriental expression. And so are the exquisite little vignettes of description, the glimpses of the world around, which are so much less important to the singer than are the charms of his love, his fair one, the fairest among women—or to her than the beloved who is far more than any other beloved—

"How shall I your true love ken
From another one."

The sentiment is universal and runs through all the ages. He is the chiefest among ten thousand: and of her she is but one, the choice one of her mother: "there is none like her, none." Sometimes she is even terrible in her beauty "like an army with banners" to the adoring lover. The Jerusalem that comes vaguely into sight behind these two beautiful figures is settled and orderly, the slopes of its hills covered with gardens, its inner economy safe and sure:—beyond its walls, stretching out in the valleys, lie pleasant fields full of vines and pomegranates and apple-trees: the rural paths are sweet with flowers, lilies above all, of which it was said a thousand years after, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these: a delightful link of association between that far-distant scene and the past, less remote, which is so much more momentous and dear. The great singer who made the song may not have been Solomon, it may have been out of pure loyalty to enhance his monarch's name that he allowed it to be attributed to Solomon; or there may be collected in it, strung upon the exquisite thread of its little drama, other utterances of primitive song in celebration of other beloveds. But it is full of unity from beginning to end. Its passion is legitimate and chastened, not hot with anxiety or any suggestion of the clandestine. It is a song of espousals, of love with no darker shadow in it than the passing clouds, the little evasions, the keen momentary pang of a meeting missed or a visit lost.

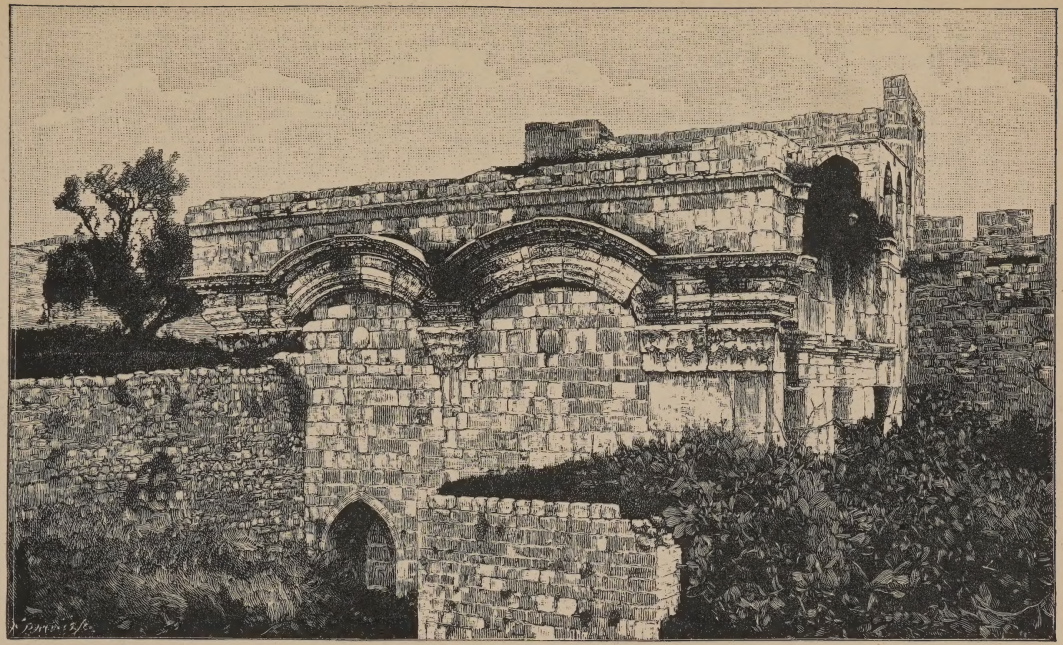
Ecclesiastes is a poem of a very different strain: yet there is no discord between the two, nothing in one, though it is the antipodes of the other, which could make us feel it incompatible that the author should be the same. On the contrary that grave and musing philosopher who

stands on the eminence of maturity and experience, has by his own showing sought with ardour all the triumphs and pleasures of life, and tasted every joy, and fathomed every sweetness. Such a man of all others is most like to have expanded himself at once in the refinements and the ardours of sentiment, and could scarcely have fallen into the monotonous garbage of so-called passion during that youth of genius and high aspiration "feeding among the lilies" which was capable of so much finer things. He had now seen the emptiness of all. Romance had died out from him: his Shulamite had become like other women, his Egyptian princess a fellow-creature moved with like passions as himself. In all the other pursuits of earth having failed in this, he had sought that supreme satisfaction which his heart had dreamed—and found it nowhere. Not in wisdom, nor in pleasure, nor in ambition, acquisition, any of those great things that excite the wishes of men. His great public works, his agriculture, his provisions of water for a thirsty land, those prodigious reservoirs which still bear his name, his wonderful buildings, his luxuries, his pleasures "the delights of the sons of men," music in all its kinds, everything that was beautiful, had failed like the rest. They occupied him but satisfied him not. As soon as an undertaking was accomplished, he found it to be vanity: it was neither so great as he had intended it to be, nor did it produce the result he sought. Even in wisdom and knowledge the end was the same: even justice and equity failed to satisfy his soul; for who could tell how soon these wise decisions should be reversed, these able measures overturned by the folly of the man who should come after him, a sad but certain prevision which after events so conclusively proved?

This last bitter thread of disappointment, the most penetrating of all sad thoughts, the profoundest, perhaps,

of human griefs, runs through all his great and melancholy musings, the same dread disappointment which had produced so much anguish to David. Yet David's had been different, more violent, less like the canker that eats into the life. Solomon was not a man to fight against a conclusion like the hotter human heart of his poet father; nor was his son a warlike, ambitious Absalom, which might perhaps have been borne—as we think always of the griefs that are not our own. What an end was that to all his plans, his manifold designs and imaginations, the greatness which had spread through the world, that he should be succeeded by a fool! We do not know nor does he tell us the preliminary steps which brought him to that conviction, nor how, after the first almost equally discomposing thought that he knew not who should come after him, the succession out of his host of children should have been changed and his choice narrowed down to Rehoboam, the son of a mother quite undistinguished, an Ammonite, a heathen woman, one of those for whom the too tolerant king,—perhaps thinking lightly in his wisdom of the distinction of names, and with a conviction in his great soul that every god to whom offerings were made was but an adumbration to the ignorant of the one God that filled heaven and earth—had created a place of worship upon Olivet. Had he specially bound himself in the heat of passion to this woman that her son should be his successor? or had the unhappy choice been forced upon him by some untold calamity, some depth of personal disappointment or sorrow, the absence of other progeny, so unlikely in such a case, or the inroads of death?

This thing, of course, can never be known to us: but it is curious that while two daughters of Solomon are mentioned in the record there is not a word of any other son, a silence which of itself is full of suggestion, and seems to indicate a still more profound depth of sorrow



THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE ENCLOSURE: THE GOLDEN GATE.

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or destitution below. Whether there had never been any others, whether they had been swept out of his house by calamity, here he remains in the end of his life, a wise man conscious that his successor will be a fool. What were all his labours worth in sight of that listless or frivolous boy, who was the heir of all? perhaps beloved as Absalom was, but concerning whom his father's melancholy insight prevented all illusion. This also was vanity, the most bitter of all. It is the keynote of the sorrowful strain which is full of the composure of despair. The great stillness of these musings is broken at the end with an impassioned appeal to the young man rejoicing in his youth, with which, perhaps, in the pathos of human weakness he might have hoped to reach that careless heart. Perhaps the shout of the revellers came borne upon the evening breeze to the ear of the philosopher as he sat musing over all those great achievements, pursued and carried out with such ardour and delight which now began to appear to him like the wrecks of life—who can tell? That, too, was vanity, the last, the most bitter, the most hopeless of all.

There is, however, something besides, another element to modify this refrain which has been caught up all over the world and through all the ages, and is, in one sense, the unalterable verdict of humanity upon itself. There is and always will be a revulsion of the soul in resistance to so dreadful a conclusion: as well as also an indignant resistance to that still more dreadful sense of the nullifying and, as it were, annihilation of all the results of a great man's life, and even of his individuality, which is involved in the sweeping downfall of every trace and effect of him, brought about by the folly of another. The heart rises against this profound injustice, the heaviest doom of nature and the one which can be least guarded against. But it seems to me that in no

production of human genius is the alternation of two different aspects of life so well set forth as in this great poem, which has been taken by the world only as the dread proclamation of one burden. Solomon, however, does not insist more strongly upon that conclusion of all mortal things that "this is vanity," than he does upon the individual balance to it which we so often lose sight of and continually ignore, the great compensation of the labourer whose work so often must come to nought. "There is no good but for a man to rejoice, and do good. And also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour." "It is good and comely . . . to enjoy the good of all the labour that he taketh under the sun . . . and to take his portion and rejoice in his labour . . . because God answereth him in the joy of his heart." This is not the doctrine of the epicurean though it may seem so to a superficial glance. It is the deep conviction of the sorrowful man who has had everything, and possesses all, and knows that everything he possesses is slipping from his grasp. He has laboured above the power of ordinary men, looking continually for some supreme result. He has embarked upon great undertakings and pushed them on with ardour to their end, with the swift concentration of every faculty upon them, with the ever renewed and ever failing hope that in that end will be the satisfaction, the sublime content, the rest from his labours which every man desires. He has added city to city, and land to land, he has built temple and palace:—and these being not enough has added ever and ever some new thing, the house of the forest of Lebanon on its fragrant thicket of pillars, and Gezer and Beth-horon with their new colonies, and the storehouses, and the stables and a hundred things besides:—but all the while in the folly of his wisdom—for is not he, too, the wise man himself, in this a fool?

—has not perceived till now that the work and labour were the joy, and not the always imperfect, never accomplished end. To rejoice in his labour because God answereth him in the joy of his heart! Here is the one thing that is not vanity. It is in the happiness of making, of producing, of exercising all the faculties that God has given, of conceiving in his heart and working out with his hands the work which he loves. A smile comes even upon that sorrowful face at the thought of the working days, the peaceful evening of rest, the awaking to all the joys of active life. No more beautiful picture of the cheerful tenor of the common life, the modest man among his fields, the workman at his work, was ever made than that which comes from the lips of this dark and sad philosopher upon the desolate heights of being, warning the world that all is vanity. Yes. Vanity of vanities saith the preacher. But yet—

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

"Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

"Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which He hath given thee under the sun: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

"To rejoice in his labour: this is the gift of God." So speaks the philosopher, the first great pessimist, who has had this gift above most men, and thought little of it according to the ways of man, always hurrying forward to a result which, when attained, was not what he sought: but who looking back sees clearly what that gift was, and the unthought-of happiness that has been. David amid all his store of preparations, his designs for the house of God which he was not allowed to build, his patterns, his laying up of this and that for the work,

was more happy than he who accomplished everything. But yet Solomon would not have had this revelation had not he, too, recollections of the fulness of his career, when he worked with all his might at whatsoever his hand found to do, and rejoiced in his labour, and found every day too short for the work that filled it. How little he had thought of that in his eager pressing towards the end, towards the result! Yet it was his portion: the result was not for him but for the world.

There was a preacher of our own day, scarcely faded yet into obscurity, who once made a strange sermon upon not only the fallacy of the hopes of men, which is a threadbare subject, but upon what he almost ventured to call the fallacy of the promises of God. He had no profane or irreverent meaning: but the burden of his teaching was that God drew men on with delusive promises in order to lure them to the better country in which all these promises were to come true. He showed how Abraham had the promise of the land in which he dwelt but never possessed more of it than sufficed for his grave, and so with all the patriarchs. How David was promised an established reign and throne, and yet his kingdom was broken up in the second generation; and how the supreme Disposer of events, like the classic Fates "kept the word of promise to the ear, and broke it to the heart." Mr. Robertson, of Brighton, was himself a man of many disappointments, and it gave, no doubt, a certain balm to his wounds to see how that bitter strain ran through all careers and anticipations of men. But yet I think that teaching of his was far inferior to the teaching of the acknowledged preacher of disappointment, the philosopher whose burden it is, proclaimed and assented to through every age of human history, that all is vanity. Clear as daylight in one reiteration after another he proclaims this one thing

that is not vanity: that a man should take pleasure in the doing of his work: that he should rejoice in his labour, that this is his portion and the gift of God, and that God answereth him in the joy of his heart. From the highest artist down to the ploughman, the straightness of whose honest furrow is the delight of his life: from the monarch—let us take a familiar example, the Queen of our own days, who if ever man or woman might, could rejoice in the results of her reign—yet who takes pride and pleasure in her labour, most of all, and daily toil—to the seamstress who sets forth overnight the work she is doing, her little creations of ribbon and muslin, to inspire her when she wakes, and rises with eagerness to continue. "For it is his portion: this is the gift of God: because God answereth him in the joy of his heart."

The reader will note what a magnificent pendent to the Jerusalem of the "Song," embowered in its gardens, with the watchmen upon the walls, and the silence of the safe and slumbering night guarded by the keepers of the city, comes in the end of this later poem, the conclusion of the tragedy which was so fair and beautiful, a romance in its beginning: when "those that look out of the windows are darkened, and the doors are shut and the daughters of music brought low," when the bridegroom who once came over the mountains, in the haste of his coming, like pillars of smoke, "is afraid of that which is high, and fears every stone in the way." When to him who fed among the lilies, the featherweight as of a grasshopper becomes a burden, and to him who was so full of life and love of life, even desire fails—"because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." He who traversed the city in those hours of youthful joy and knocked at the window of his love, and played the pretty drama of evasion to draw her after

him—now looks down from his palace roof, and sees in imagination the last scene, so soon to come, the mourners rending their garments, passing about the shadowed ways with bent heads, and dust upon their foreheads. The one is as clear to him as the other in the light of sombre anticipation, as in that of the voluptuous moon, the evening light of memory. His life is complete with all its ambitions between these two scenes, his lilies no longer sweet to him, his burial cave open and ready beside his father David, the work of whose life, like his own, is to be scattered to the winds by that careless youth and his boyish councillors who are holding their revels close by. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Yet Solomon, too, had had his portion—the gift of God.

Solomon, however, great as he was, was not all great. The morality of that early age was all unsettled and unassured. In respect to the sexes no utterance had been made, nor was ever made by authoritative command—a strange thing to think of, but a true. The best of men had a plurality of wives, and the number was but a detail, the principle being thus granted. David celebrated his entrance into Jerusalem by adding a number of women to his harem. Solomon according to the record went far beyond even that indulgence. He "loved many strange women, together with" or in addition to "the daughter of Pharaoh." The mother of his son Rehoboam was an Ammonite. Probably something of the same kind of research, which was afterwards carried into effect for king Ahasuerus, the collection of all the most beautiful women of the time wherever they were to be found, was made for the delectation of Solomon, connoisseur as he was in every kind of beauty. From Moab, from Ammon, from Sidon, the daughters of kings, the most accomplished and perfect of the maidens of all the surrounding nations would be brought up for

his choice, the most delicate homage that could be rendered to the potentate. Did the proud race of Judah, the no less proud and independent tribes of Israel, his own people, revolt against such a tribute one wonders, and object to render up the flower of their households to the caprice of the king? Such a conjecture at least may be permitted, in view of the constant succession of strange nationalities in the list of royal marriages. Perhaps in the busy life of such a man, the fair new face, the piquancy of such varied manners as might be possible among nations between which so little real difference of race existed, gave a diversion not forbidden to the many occupations and thoughts with which his mind was full. To imagine that these surroundings made Solomon into a mere voluptuary, above all into that most odious of characters, a feeble and senile libertine, is quite uncalled for. It is not this which brings censure upon his head, but the fact that the princesses and slaves of his household were "strange women," foreigners, each bringing with her some foreign worship. The critics tell us that it was the jealousy of the priests, the pettiness of local prejudice, which made this bringing in of "strange women" a thing so continually denounced in Israel. But no reasonable judgment can fail to see how fatal the force of such an influence must have been upon the religious principles of the people. Rome, the wisest of human corporations, has found it necessary in our advanced times to take the strongest steps against this danger, well foreseeing not only the risk of anything like justice in the matter, of yielding up half of the children to the training of a Protestant mother—but also the inevitable slackening of all bonds, even when this is prevented, which must ensue. It was more fatal still when the antagonism was between a national system painfully struggling to keep intact the worship of one God, and

the idolatries that seem to have had at all times so many attractions for light and unwary spirits. The Jewish priests and conservators were like those reformers who looked on with angry and jealous eyes at the royal chapel in which the foreign queen had to be permitted to hear her mass, whatever reasons there might be against it. The reasons were infinitely stronger on the side of the Jews. But with Solomon, who probably looked on all those clinging dependents round him with a certain contempt as far too slight creatures to affect any man except for the fleeting moment of their beauty and empire over his senses—it is not difficult to understand the facility with which he might be persuaded to provide for each her means of religious comfort or distraction, her grove on Olivet, her cherished idol: nay that he should have been led by one soft persuasion after another to go with the queen of the moment and witness her rites, he whose desire—perhaps whose weakness—it was to *approfondir* everything, to know what was meant in every vagary of human fancy, in very development of human thought. What he did from such a motive, with the smile upon his grave lip to see how far the folly and the wisdom of mankind, its superstition and dim apprehension of the supernatural would go: or dragged by some winning favourite to satisfy her love or her pride by the triumph of his companionship: would be of the most fatal example for the lighter beings who were drawn along in his train, and who, perhaps, believed it would please the king if they followed these gods of the women: and still more for the ignorant and gaping crowd for whom there were always so many attractions in those mysteries of the groves and high places. Queen Mary's mass in Holyrood was no such danger even for the courtiers who surrounded her, yet we know how fiercely that was resisted, with what denunciations,—

Astarte herself meaning nothing more terrible even to the most reasonable of that time.

This is the shadow that fell upon Solomon's great career. Perhaps also he fell into the abyss of luxurious self-indulgence which is the great temptation of Oriental life, in his later years; or at least so retired himself—having done all and organised all and set the machine of government in full operation—within the seclusion of royal solitude, as might make it appear that he had thus fallen. And yet it is impossible to associate with his name any such anti-climax of sensual decadence. The still despair of that conclusion to which in his heart he had come, the conviction that a man may do all, realise all, achieve all that his fancy can conceive, yet remain for ever unsatisfied, achieving nothing perfectly, incapable at his best of turning his ideal into reality or accomplishing what he would: the still more profound disenchantment with which all his early dreams of human nobleness fell back upon his heart, leaving nothing better than the possibility that one man among ten thousand might be found that was true, but among women, not so much as one—no doubt turned him away in a growing distaste for the company of flatterers and deceivers, to his forlorn isolation of kinghood and greatness. And who can tell what private disappointments made his great heart sick. Had he no son but Rehoboam? had some curse of barrenness fallen on his house, or some plague ravaged the chambers of the children? was there but one, and he a fool, oh, last and most overwhelming of disappointments! to inherit the name of the great Solomon and carry on his mighty works, his splendour and his power?

All this is lost in the mists of a distance which no eye can penetrate; the wonderful thing is that we should know so much of him, behold him thus in his palace

and his retirement, the most ambitious, the most energetic, the most aspiring, the most deeply disappointed of all men: hurrying through a thousand labours, organising every kind of enterprise, pressing the very progress of the world to forestall the times and satisfy his soul: setting out like a bridegroom to run his race in all the glory and joy of youth: standing at the end upon his high tower of contemplation to deliver the judgment of humanity upon itself. He is no primitive hero, no product of the primeval imagination. Such an image belongs, we should say, to the very climax of civilisation, to the most accomplished and exhausted age, when all has been done that man can do. The mind of Solomon bears a far deeper moral and consciousness than that of Alexander: the one longing for more worlds to subdue, the other gravely smiling upon a universe of which he has tasted all the sensations, acknowledging that were there yet a thousand worlds before him, there would be in all but the repetition of a failing experiment, a continually renewed dissatisfaction, a dream always pursued but never realised.

But still more wonderful, more extraordinarily advanced in progress and experience is the conviction with which every proclamation of his disappointment is accompanied: that it is in the doing of the work, and not in the end and result of it that the happiness of existence lies. So cheerful, so merciful, so consoling an utterance is not what we have been taught to look for from Solomon: yet there it is, pervading the gray twilight of that ending life with the reflections of a glowing manhood: that a man should "rejoice and do good in his life," that he should "enjoy the good of his labour" "for it is his portion"—that he should "rejoice in his labour: for this is the gift of God," "because God answereth him in the joy of his heart"! The other,

the darker sentence that "all is vanity" has been adopted by acclaim, a conclusion in which he has simply forestalled every generation of his successors, and all the wise men who have followed him. But this, too, is the burden of Solomon, not less emphatic:—that the joy of life is in the doing: that the gift of God is that satisfaction which lies in a man's work and the exercise of his faculties: that he who does with all his might what his hand finds to do, is the happy man. The sage and the fool, alike, hurry over that wholesome happiness of the daily round, despising it, looking for something better, for some pitiful result, some poor achievement which is to make them demigods among men. And this is vanity, vanity of vanities. But to rejoice in his labour is not vain: it is the portion of man: it is the gift of God. God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

CHAPTER V.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

THERE could be no more tremendous comment upon that conclusion of Solomon's philosophy than the history of his own house and kingdom. The life of this great prince was wholly occupied in building up and assuring the monarchy which his father had founded. He had entered upon an inheritance full of embarrassment and care, with an elder brother in semi-rebellion, and the great chief of his army, the head of all warlike enterprise in Israel opposed to him—while himself still young, untried, upon the top of that wave of fickle popular enthusiasm upon which no one can calculate for more than a moment. He had upon his shoulders as his chief charge, his *raison d'être*, so to speak, the building of that great Temple which, no doubt, was to many a devout imagination, and of which, perhaps, very few foresaw the future importance as the one centre and rallying ground for the national spirit and heart. Solomon had before him the tremendous task not only of building that Temple, but of making it accepted of the people—the distant tribes who acknowledged his sway, but knew nothing of his Jerusalem, and who had their own favourite shrines and altars, sanctified by great names over all the country, and perhaps saw no necessity for that centralisation of worship. This work, as happens with so

much great national work, besides the glory and joy of executing it,—which he recognised afterwards, as we have seen, as in reality the recompense of his labour, and the best thing in his life,—was for the good of future generations rather than of those immediately succeeding him. Its result, no doubt, was immediate disappointment. After the effort of its construction, and the great ceremonies which attended its consecration, and which must for the mere pageant's sake if nothing else, have caused much excitement, and attracted crowds to Jerusalem—it must soon have become evident to the king that the habits of the people were too deeply rooted to be overthrown, and that not in a day or in a lifetime would that revolution be accomplished, and the heart of Israel turned to a sole centre of worship. Even in the time of Solomon himself it is very probable that the attendance at the yearly ceremonies dwindled away, and after the first curiosity was satisfied, and the excitement calmed down, that Jerusalem alone, the king's household, and the citizens, and perhaps the villages of the surrounding country, furnished all or almost all the attendance in its courts. This would be so natural that perhaps it did not strike any one as wonderful in the composure of everyday life which succeeded the transport of the great national foundation, the new thing in Israel. That Solomon's own action—whether in contemptuous toleration of the women's wishes as things of little account, or in spectatorship of them as curious moral phenomena which it was worth while to study, or—what is much less conceivable—in actual divergence from his own loftier way into the worship of those idols which it was the first principle of the Hebrew creed to denounce and condemn—should have been the first and greatest interruption of the influence of the established creed and worship, is wonderful indeed. Its

extraordinary inconsistency is, however, even less amazing than the possibility of a downfall of the kind in such a man.

It is still more wonderful to think of the sudden breaking up of the kingdom which had been established as it appeared on so strong a foundation, and which seemed to have so many guarantees of security. That one slight soul should have overturned with one act of folly the labours of two great men, and changed the future of his race at a touch, seems well nigh inconceivable, if it were not that the period was one in which such catastrophes were frequent, and in which not only individual kings and dynasties, but great empires disappeared in a day, and were succeeded by others, as one wave follows another over the surface of the sea: and also because the whole history of Israel is that of a struggle between good and evil, a sort of great historical lesson or parable written in the lines of nature and following the laws of a succession such as all history records and acknowledges: but yet in all its circumstances specially answering to the great purpose, which has made this little story, the chronicle of one of the smallest realms in the world, into an example for the universe.

No doubt, however, Solomon's very splendour, and the great things he had done, had some share in the rending asunder of the kingdom he had made so great. He had inflicted a great deal of compulsory work upon the nation which loved fighting better than labour, and demanded contributions which perhaps were not always given with a willing heart; he had laid upon their shoulders the yoke which national unity implies, the expense of settled government, the taxes—which it is so difficult to persuade a primitive people are but their honest share of national expenses. All the stirring up of new life and habits, the introduction even of new

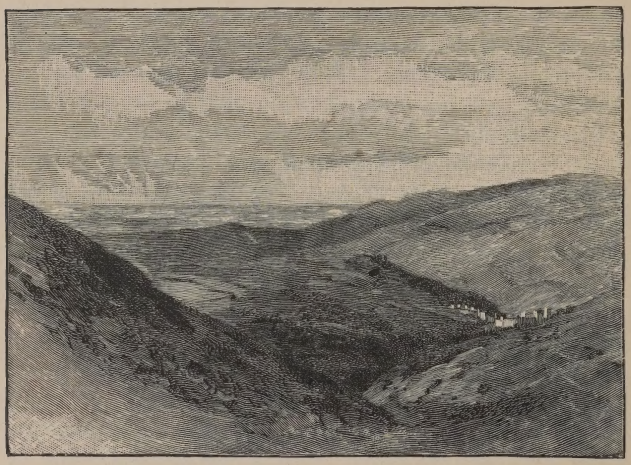
industries, the work in Lebanon, the pressgang, perhaps, which constrained the timid fishermen of the coast into those voyages beyond sea which were the most wonderful enterprise of the time—were disturbing influences to the pastoral people, who, when they were not fighting, were chiefly occupied with the care of cattle or the unlaborious tillage of a soil in which the corn grew and the vine threw forth its clusters, almost of themselves. And the final consolidation of these wandering tribes into a fully organised nation was a delicate operation calling for both prudence and power, neither of which the new sovereign possessed. The disruption was as sudden as the formation had been. The multitude dispersed as it had come together under one prevailing influence. The attraction of a personal notability, a great hero in whose prowess and power of defending them from all assault they were confident, had been the foundation of the throne. And now the counter-influence, the sense of weakness which could neither protect nor deliver them, exercised a similar though contrary power. "To your tents, O Israel!" The multitudes who had formed the larger portion of the kingdom melted away, and the house of David was left upon its hill top with its splendid Temple and palace all glowing in gold and colour, far too magnificent for its diminished resources and power. It had the promise of continuance, and that it should be established for ever; but the greater part of its strength and prestige was irrevocably gone.

Yet the kingdom of Judah and Benjamin, the remnant, overweighted with the relics of its own greatness, was in much better case than the revolted Israel. For that self-doomed people there was henceforward little peace. Rebellion after rebellion rose among them: one usurper succeeded another, and one idolatry was added to another till anarchy and blasphemy reigned. It is unnecessary

to enter into the troubled and often confused story which is in many respects the most like a collection of legends strung upon a spare thread of history of anything in the Scriptures. The story of the prophets Elijah and Elisha contained some of the finest and most picturesque scenes and some of the most rude and trivial. Nothing can exceed the majesty of the lonely figure in the desert, his head wrapped in his cloak, his soul enveloped in darkness, who stands before the great invisible God through thunder and earthquake in an extraordinary mingling of submission and defiance, with a proud desolation and sense of abandonment which is a reproach to his Maker, "I, I alone am left":—neither is there anything more wonderful in those ancient records than the still small voice which is the voice of God, nor that which it says, a statement so unexpected, an answer which cuts the very ground from the feet of the self-absorbed and self-asserting prophet: "Yet have I seven thousand men in Israel who have not bent the knee to Baal." Human folly and faithlessness in the midst even of heroic suffering and solitude, confronted with the great calm and knowledge of all secrets which are in the fathomless consciousness of the Divine, were never more exquisitely or more surprisingly set forth. But on the other hand the atmosphere of miracle which surrounds Elisha brings us back from those primeval wilds with something of the same feeling with which we regard the petty prodigies of a mediæval saint in which mere convenience is sufficient warrant for a breach of the laws of nature, and the sacred workman fatigued hangs his axe upon a sunbeam, with a comfortable composure which reaches the length of absurdity. The almost complete freedom of the miracles of Scripture from this continually recurring debasement of all other records of sign and wonder, is one of the most striking distinctions of sacred story:

only lost, I think, and for a very short time, in these confused, probably abridged and bewildering narratives of a period of anarchy and trouble. This history of continual overthrow and re-establishment, the reign of might over right,—in which such supremacy as there was, was within the reach of every strong man that might arise, and no principle of patriotism or fealty survived to protect the distracted race,—lasted for some hundred and fifty years: when Israel was obliterated by the Assyrians and their race and record swept off without recovery. That those "seven thousand"—a numeral of multitude not to be rigidly interpreted—the undefiled souls, incapable of infidelity, who were safe in the perfect understanding of their God, maintained their religion wherever they were driven: that many faithful bands and groups and pious individuals retained during all changes the great ideal of the national mission and its dwelling at Jerusalem, there can be no doubt: or that many a humble family was left when the miserable stream of captives disappeared into the darkness—feeding their flocks upon the hills of Samaria and keeping up the traditions of a purer faith among the colonists of the north. But Israel, as a nation, with all its anarchies and rebellion, ceased to be, in the natural course of events, and was heard of no more. How it was warned, entreated, threatened, and besought to save itself in time, to return to the Lord, and give up its idols, and live purely and truly according to those teachings of the law which it had inherited as much as Judah, the impassioned utterances of the prophets prove. That they, too, fell into utter confusion, and became by times a school of flatterers, promising victory and happiness to please the king and keep their popularity among the people, is equally evident. But there rarely failed some independent voice to proclaim the sudden penalties which in

those days were part of the economy of moral government, the strong and unmistakable language of a typical and primitive age. "But Israel would not hear, my people would not consider." The ferocity of nature, the wild forces of rebellion and anarchy, the impure religions that were the special affliction and temptation of the time, swept like a flood over the people, who had not



SEBASTIEH (SAMARIA).

been able to preserve their individuality, and that mission which has separated their race from all others in the records of the world.

It fell to Judah to keep up that mission, to Judah already distinguished, which held the privilege of birthright among the tribes, and which had already been chosen to produce the reigning family, the throne established upon the promise of the Lord. It is curious to find that Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, which might well

have entertained a grudge against his supplanters, and set up its grievance as a motive for withdrawal more keen than any other of the tribes could claim, should be the one faithful to the house of David which had humiliated and overthrown its chief: but perhaps the local bond, and the fact that Jerusalem was within its borders gave a counterbalance of attraction.

These two tribes were left with their splendid city, in the smallest of kingdoms—less than a German principality, and more than usually apt, with all the stores of gold and precious things which were known over all the East as decorations of Solomon's Temple, to call forth the cupidity of their stronger neighbours. It was not indeed very long before this temptation brought up a raid of Egyptians, no doubt perfectly informed through the attendants of Solomon's queen of what wonderful things lay at the mercy of an invader with so small a contingent to guard them. Rehoboam had been but five years upon his diminished throne when this occurred, and there is no record even of any serious resistance made. The Egyptian hordes came up in numbers sufficient to overpower all the feeble forces of Judah. They crushed the "fenced cities," the little vanguard of defence each on its hillside which stood between the capital and the desert of the south. And when the princes gathered round the king in Jerusalem to consult what were their possibilities of defence, the prophet who came into the midst of them with his message forbidding resistance, was no doubt the most prudent as well as the most safe adviser. Rehoboam was no hero, neither had he the talents of a general. He had been trained in the arts of peace rather than war, and no doubt those foolish counsellors who had betrayed him into the great misadventure of his life, were like himself the product of a luxurious period of peace—or they would not have let the enemy reach

their very gates before they gathered, cowed and vacillating, round the king whom they had already so sorely misled.

"Oh for one hour of Wallace wight
Or well-tried Bruce to rule the fight!"

Oh, for the Lion of the house of Judah, the grim Joab, the three mighty men who once burst through the Philistine hosts, to bring their chief a cruse of water from the well of Bethlehem! No such heroes were those who looked out with pale faces from the ramparts of Jerusalem, and saw the dark Egyptians with their strange ensigns swarming in the valley. They "humbled themselves," the sons of those men whose feet were on the neck of kings, the heir of great Solomon, the successors of the heroes—and stood by with what countenances we may imagine while the dark crowd poured into the Temple, and carried off its riches, tearing down the gold from cornice and lintel, bearing away the great shields and splendid vases which must have made the very paths burn and glow, the fierce sun striking out dazzling reflections from every blazing surface, as the captors wound down the hill carrying their trophies high. Not the old men alone but those who were still in their prime must have remembered how these same golden vessels had thrown back the sunshine in triumph, as they were carried into the Temple over the great bridge which spanned the valley, to decorate the house of the Lord. Vanity of vanities saith the preacher. But who, the darkest of dreamers, the most austere of judges, could have imagined that it would come so soon?

The history of Judah is a long tale of national vicissitude, of rising and falling fortune, such as has always distinguished primitive history, especially in the East, where catastrophes are so sudden, and the character of the monarch has so much to do with the prosperity of

the kingdom. There were great examples of enlightened and powerful princes who crushed the idolatry into which, up to a certain point in their history the Jews seem to have been so ready to relapse, and preserved that national consecration as the people of God, which was their great distinction in the world, making such a difference between them and their neighbours of Moab and Edom, and even the highly civilised and wealthy Tyre, as words cannot say; while there were also on the other hand kings of less note, most frequently the sons of foreign mothers, to whom the debasement of idolatrous worship was more congenial than the austere rites of the Temple. That many a family group from the depths of the country came up unmolested in their humility to keep the feasts in the great national sanctuary cannot be doubted, nor that there came great seasons of national compunction when the memorials and associations of idolatry struck the minds of the faithful with unusual horror, and caused sudden uprisings of renewed devotion as well as of fierce antagonism to the secret shrines and false gods which remained here and there hidden among the trees in some luxuriant grove. On the other hand it was more easy to a people busy with their fields and flocks to offer their own sacrifices on some old altar near at hand, sanctified by the recollection of patriarch or prophet, than to put all secular business aside, and withdraw the ass and the camel from the necessities of daily work in order to present themselves at Jerusalem: so that the two impulses acted and reacted upon each other, keeping a perpetual rising and falling of the spiritual barometer. Though we do not question that the prosperity and peace of Jerusalem followed these risings and fallings, the quickened religious life being a symptom as well as a cause of quickened energy and greater power, while the vice and superstition of the idolatrous rites—probably

pursued among the Hebrews, who were nothing if not religious, with greater fervour than among the careless peoples who knew no better—involved debasement in every characteristic faculty: yet, no doubt, all was worked out according to the ordinary rules of life without bearing any specially miraculous character in the eyes of those to whom it was the course of every day.

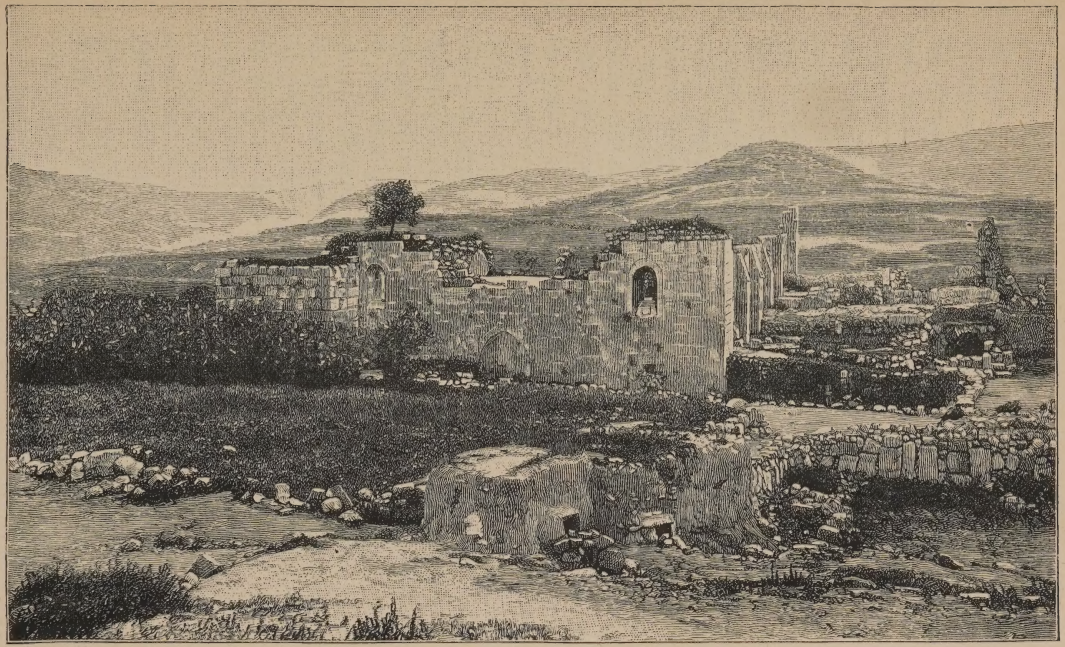
And there were great princes in the line of rulers who succeeded each other for nearly three hundred years, son following father with an extraordinary continuance, while the other kingdoms about rose and fell, and Israel, the prey of one victorious captain after another, at last disappeared altogether from the scene. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, brought back something of the wealth and supremacy of Solomon's days again and again to the city among the hills: they had their little wars, sometimes against their brethren of the other tribes, sometimes against the old traditional foes of Ammon and Edom and Moab. And in the midst of these there suddenly rose up against them a more powerful enemy, the new scourge of the East, the great empire which had appeared like a portent marching from the north over the necks of all the lesser sovereignties, the Assyrians who were destined to sweep Israel away, and to make in the end a long eclipse of Jerusalem. But even against this foe little Judah held head for a long time, sometimes by diplomacy, sometimes by arms. It was a hard fighting life for the little kingdom which lay surrounded by rivals and enemies, with its little circle of fenced cities, its citadel on the hill of Zion, its sanctuary still rich with spoil which might well have attracted envious eyes, amid the other little brigands of nations camping to the east and west, towards the coast of the Mediterranean on one hand, and beyond the Dead Sea on the other. To this sanctuary every one of the greater kings made such

additions and restorations of ornament and wealth as were possible, and the advent of each new monarch of the higher and better kind was signalised by a sort of reformation, now greater, now less, casting down of high places, burning of idols, national acts of worship, and a recall to the service of God of those who so persistently and continuously fell away from it as soon as the immediate pressure was withdrawn. This curious struggle is of itself a sufficient answer to those critics who would have us believe that Jehovah, the great "I am" of early visitation, was a local deity appropriate to the Jews as Baal or Dagon were to other tribes about them. The worshippers of Baal and Dagon had no objection to a god of the Hebrews. When the colonists of Assyria were settled in the place of the Israelites all they wanted was to be taught how to perform the worship of the deity of their new habitation. They were quite willing and ready to add that god to their other gods, and no prophet or even priest objected in the name of religion.

But with the Hebrews there was no such toleration. The struggle against idolatry was constant and undeviating; though that it was also at the same time an ever-enduring attraction and temptation is very evident. The Jews, like every other conquering people, retained among them a great number of the aboriginal inmates of the country; they were their neighbours, their servants, and even in some cases their defenders: and there could be no such marked inferiority as is usually seen in the subject race where Hittites and Jebusites were found even among the "mighty men" of the primitive army. Closer still was the bond made by marriages between the superior and inferior races. Myriads of little Hebrews must have been led under the cover of their mothers' draperies to watch the mysteries of the grove, to kiss their hands to the queen of heaven, in a ready

childish devotion half made of natural obedience and half of the charm of things forbidden; so that the earliest associations of life would be connected with those stolen rites, with the fascination of the outdoor service, the great stars looking down through every green tree to charm the heart into natural adoration of that dazzling host of heaven. The child brought up in a harem is naturally far more the child of his mother than of his father, and, no doubt, this fact explains not only the continual relapses of the Hebrews, but the denunciations of the prophets against women, who notwithstanding now and then the practical example of a notable woman, like her who spoke to Joab from the wall of Tekoa, are almost universally spoken of in the Old Testament in a harsh and contemptuous tone. It would be curious to inquire how much of the habitual contempt of the tone of men towards women in all ages is derived from this same source—the habit of the early world to consider the often foreign and alien wife as in continual secret opposition, baffling and bringing to nought the best-laid plans of the head of the house, who was but one to resist the many, full of individual and differing characteristics whom all his efforts could never fathom or understand. The deeply founded doctrine of feminine perversity and unaccountableness may well be one of those survivals of the unfittest sentiment, which mock science to its face.

This, however, is too natural to require to be dwelt upon. What is wonderful is that so evident a tendency existing among its people was never recognised or yielded to by the little kingdom which lay in the very heart of all these idolatries. Why should the Hebrew have resisted the tolerant philosophy of his neighbours and refused to carry on his own worship in good-humoured fellowship with all the others? Why if Jehovah was but as Baal should that little belligerent people have fought



SAMARIA: RUINS OF CRUSADERS' CHURCH IN FOREGROUND.

To face page 196.

a continual battle for His supremacy and poured out of its heart every denunciation, every scorn that human words could express upon the things of wood and stone, the images which had eyes and saw not, which had ears and heard not, the god who perhaps was asleep, or on a journey—last and most tremendous satire of all, who was cut from the same tree with which the workman made his fire. "He will take thereof and warm himself: yea he kindleth it and baketh bread: yea he maketh a god and worshippeth it." Why this irreconcilable intolerance, this struggle carried on from age to age against every law of natural association, and all the precedents and all the examples around?

The critics can allege no better reason than a conspiracy of certain wild bards, half poet, half maniac, who invented both history and law, not to speak of the poetry in which it cannot be denied that they were supreme, in order to make themselves the rulers of the destiny of their people. But there is no explanation in this very artificial hypothesis of the violence of Hebrew opposition, from their first revelation as a distinct people, against all fellowship with idols. The struggle was one of life and death, especially in the latter part of their career. Whenever there was an infirm or feeble ruler, the relaxed authority led to ever fresh fallings away of the people; but whenever the government was in a capable hand it began with a reformation, a recalling of the original conditions upon which the kingdom was constituted, and a determined stand against the idols and abominations of the stranger. The anarchy and continual revolutions of Israel pointed the moral of that other and greater apostasy. Had their God been but the local deity, the little Jehovah of the hill country and the desert, how much trouble might all have been spared, how much unnecessary pressure of the conscience, how

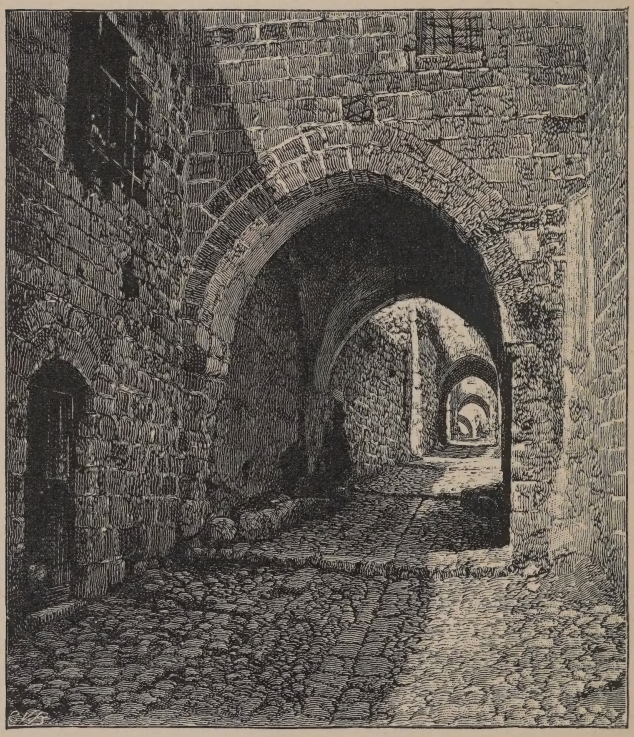
many national convulsions! The other gods would not have objected to share their Olympus, such as it was, with an additional pretender to Divine honours. There need have been no trouble about the matter. A god the more was far less offence than a nationality the more in that crowded area, and what with perpetual bouts of fighting and endless treaties and pacts between themselves in an ever-changing balance of power, these crowded nations managed to exist together and make what progress was possible. But between the great God of heaven and earth and the idols that were stocks and stones there could be no pact or compromise. The fight in this case was unceasing, everlasting. There was no remaining silent while that controversy went on. It was as a fire burning in the veins of him who was compelled to be a witness of the transgression of his people, an iniquity which could not be condoned.

The reign of Hezekiah is, perhaps, the greatest era in the later history of the house of David. We have a two-fold record of it, that of the historical books, and the more detailed narrative of certain portions of his life which is to be found amid the wonderful odes and lyrics of the prophet-poet Isaiah. He was the son of Ahaz, one of the princes of the line who had fallen away most fatally from the tradition and mission of his race. The amplified record of the book of Chronicles represents that king in the blackest colours. He not only fell into the most brutal of idolatries, that of sacrificing his children to Moloch, but wreaked a sort of superstitious vengeance upon the Temple when he found himself in the lowest depths of trouble, not only conciliating the Assyrians by the sacrifice of its treasures, which would be comprehensible, but cutting down its altars with the savage disappointment of an idolator whose god has not responded to his appeal, and shutting up its desecrated doors, so that

for a time, at least, the authorised and established services of religion must have come to an end. His son, as sons so often do, no doubt a disapproving spectator of the father's errors, began his reign upon a principle entirely different. It is strange to think what must have been the thoughts of a young man who had himself in his childhood perhaps "passed through the fire to Moloch," if that mysterious horror means anything less than absolute murder, or, at least, had received an image of the horrible ceremony in its fire and smoke and shrieks of suffering into his earliest memory—when he himself in his turn assumed the power. His mother was "the daughter of Zechariah"—probably a Zechariah described in the reign of Hezekiah's grandfather Uzziah as a man "who had understanding in the visions of God"—at all events a Hebrew and not a stranger; and he had accordingly in all probability been trained in the faith of his fathers, to abhor and abominate the system which reigned in Jerusalem where there were "altars in every corner" while the national sanctuary was closed and desolate.

Hezekiah began his reign by opening and repairing the Temple, calling together again the dispersed priests, and with as little delay as possible restoring the system of worship with all its solemnities. A proscription of priests has been a sufficiently common occurrence in history since then—but no restoration, perhaps, has been so complete as that of the tribe of banished and persecuted Levites of all classes from the high priest to the doorkeepers, whom Hezekiah "gathered together into the east street," probably that which is still known as the street of David, in order to commit the purification of the Temple into their hands. They must have come up from the villages where they were living, and out of the depths of the city where they had been hidden, at the first proclamation of the young king to whose acces-

sion, no doubt, all had been looking with anxiety and hope. The streets of Jerusalem we are warranted in believing are little changed from that day: with the same



A STREET IN JERUSALEM.

deep caverns of primitive shops and houses, low arches opening upon a chamber with little shelter from the passer-by outside: the precipitous narrow line of way like a ravine cut deep between two walls of dark buildings

inclining often towards each other, keeping out the hot and fervid day: or covered with sombre arcades, here and there debouching into a little opening which shows a blaze of sunlight at the end of the darkness: and now and then penetrated by some arrow of light from a window or slit in the lofty arches overhead. The crowd still streams up and down upon the steep causeway and continual rough steps of stone that dive into the hollow with an abruptness modified by no thought or possibility of wheeled conveyance passing that way.

We can imagine the young king in one of the openings, above or below, addressing the servants of the Temple who streamed into the arcade, an indefinite crowd in their white tunics, while the priests stood round him below. "My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him." Other than mere burning of incense was the business required of them now. They had to cleanse the house of the Lord, the priests bringing out "all the uncleanness"—the ruins of those altars and decorations which Ahaz had cut in pieces, the broken metal, and fragments of the desecrated sanctuary—to the outer court, whence all this rubbish which once was hallowed to sacred use was carried by the Levites into the valley of the Kedron, to be cast into the brook there. The process of cleansing within the Temple occupied eight days, and on the sixteenth day the restoration was completed. Then once again Jerusalem put on her festal robes and the whole city streamed forth following the joyful procession of the king across the great bridge that spanned the valley, where the crowd proceeding from one height to another must have been a sight unrivalled to all the groups upon the housetops and those that thronged the outer courts spreading green and cool around the renovated sanctuary. The harps and the cymbals, "the instruments of David," the

priests with the silver trumpets sounded forth a welcome as the procession drew nigh. "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David the king." What was the song they sang?

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In the mountain of His holiness.

"Beautiful for situation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion,

"The city of the great King.
God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

Or was it this, the burden of which is repeated again and again in all the accounts of the different restorations of the Temple and its worship, as though it were the anthem fixed for such occasions.

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good:
For His mercy endureth for ever.

"Let Israel now say,
That His mercy endureth for ever.

"Let the house of Aaron now say,
That His mercy endureth for ever.

"Let them now that fear the Lord say,
That His mercy endureth for ever.

"I called upon the Lord in distress:
The Lord answered me,
And set me in a large place.

. . . . .

"Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will go in unto them,
And I will praise the Lord.

"This gate of the Lord,
Into which the righteous shall enter.

"I will praise Thee:
For Thou hast heard me,
And art become my salvation.

. . . . .

"Blessed be he that cometh
In the name of the Lord:
We have blessed you
Out of the house of the Lord."

Over the deep inner valley of the Tyropœon, spanned by Solomon's great bridge, across which the long procession wound, over the valley of the Kedron upon the other side of Mount Moriah, now called the valley of Jehoshaphat, which winds round the base of the Temple, the unaccustomed music must have rung out awaking many echoes. The great sanctuary stood between the two, upon its heights, walled round with the ramparts of Solomon. Whether the king inhabited Solomon's palace in the same enclosure, or whether that—no doubt, ravaged as well as the sanctuary by repeated invaders, had also fallen into ruin, there is no evidence. But in any case crowds of passengers and many a processional group from the faithful around must have streamed over the bridge keeping up a continual flutter of movement and colour, while the welcoming blessing rang out from the sacred gates to those that came in the name of the Lord, the blessing out of the house of the Lord which was so old and yet so new, a liturgical drama as perfect as anything that has been devised by all the refinements of ecclesiastical ceremony. The music of the East has never been that language of the soul which it has come to be in the reflective and sentimental ages of modern Europe, and, no doubt, it was a very primitive science in these primeval days, a chant in which the words and meaning of the song were of more importance than harmony and effective combinations of sound. Yet when the great strain rose

up to the skies with many a heavy bass and many an untrained treble joining in (and, no doubt, also many a sob and outcry of religious fervour) as the multitude poured a long singing—"Open to me the gates of righteousness": and was answered by the clear pealing notes of the educated voices—"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord," the effect of an appeal and answer so universal, so comprehensible, the real voice of the people and reply of its leaders must have been far greater than the most admirably constructed service. I once heard, in Notre Dame in Paris, at one of the *conférences des hommes*, the Lenten course of instruction which occasionally fills that wonderful church with an assembly of men, thousands together, the great hymn of the Stabat Mater sung in plain song, in unison, by the whole assembly. Musical connoisseurs who would have listened with calm criticism to the most perfect performance of Rossini's *chef-d'œuvre*, stood there speechless and could only listen and tremble at the great song that rolled through those noble arches, a volume of sound which the imagination could not but feel more worthy of the ear of God than the most melodious trills and intricate harmonies of all the singing men and singing women in the world. And thus with the wild Oriental note, the cadenced cry of a primitive people, must the renewed service of the Temple have sounded forth, filling the vibrating air and all the hill-tops of Judah with the sound of the worship of a multitude, most imposing and impressive hearing to be had upon this earth.

The same scene with more touching ceremonies still was repeated shortly after, when the first Passover of which we have any account in the histories of Judah as a kingdom, was celebrated. It is a fact much relied upon by those who support the strange theory that the

elaborate ceremonials of Jewish worship were invented, so to speak, in the reign of Hezekiah, that this is the first occasion upon which it appears in the national history. There were, however, many reasons which make the detailed narrative here, on this special occasion, very reasonable and natural. It was not only the greatest expression of a national reformation and revival of religion—but it was at the same time a most politic act, perhaps the wisest that could be taken to bring about a reunion of the so long separated tribes and to re-establish Jerusalem as the general centre for all Hebrews, not only the section of Judah and Benjamin. The kingdom of Israel had come to a disastrous end, and its constitution as a separate economy was destroyed. Its king, its chiefs, all the governing classes, the educated and the wealthy portion of the people had been carried away into captivity; only the insignificant and harmless part of the nation, the pastoral dwellers in the fields, the defenceless villages which could form no danger for the conquering race, were left—a remnant in which, however, the very soul of a nation and its best power of renovation often lies. To draw back this remnant of Israel into its old allegiance to the house of David, and to re-establish the ancient unity of the tribes was a work to which no true statesman could be indifferent, nor any sound believer. And Hezekiah and his counsellors proved themselves to be both (as well, perhaps, as ambitious and astute men of the world) by making immediate overtures to that wreck of a nation. The King of Judah "sent posts" over all the country with a proclamation, calling upon the people to come up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover "for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written." His intention was that this invitation should be published from Dan to Beersheba: but it would seem that the messengers, in the distraction

of the times, or because the other parts of the territory of Israel had been already colonised by foreign races, accomplished only a part of their mission. The posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulon. They were not well received in the house of Joseph: "They laughed them to scorn and mocked them" we are told. "Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulon humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem"—the remnant of humble and faithful people which is always left in every period of national apostacy. Had the passover been a new thing this call to the scattered Israelites would have been mere arrogant folly alienating instead of conciliating: for what interest could Ephraim or the other tribes have had in a new invention of the Jews?

From all the immediate country, the land of Judah and Benjamin, the households came, with that united force of religious feeling and of the pleasure of a national holiday which is in every pilgrimage. Those who have seen the curious groups that come up from the country to Jerusalem now, in slow and silent progress, the women mounted high upon the camel, sometimes sheltered by a strange little tent which sways and shakes with every long measured step like a boat at sea, the man armed to the teeth, with his feeble old musket slung over his shoulder, his pistol and knife in his belt, mounted upon the ass which always heads the procession, or walking by its side—can form some idea of what the travelling pilgrims must have looked like, as in solitary families or groups and combinations from town and village they came along towards the white walls and towers gleaming on the hillside, and visible far off from the direction of Israel, from all the paths that led from the north. The religion of Mohammed in its skilful adoption of dates and customs has organised a yearly

pilgrimage from Jerusalem to the so-called tomb of Moses, which makes a sort of balance to the feasts of the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter, and thus calls together a crowd of pious Mussulmans to hold in check the other crowds that pour into Jerusalem at that season. And it is among the pilgrim groups, which come from the distant desert and many a far-off village, for this ceremonial that the most perfect picture of the primitive pilgrimage is furnished. The pilgrim from Asshur or Zebulon would have no rifle, no pistol, in his belt, with which to defend his household—but he would have his knife, his spear, perhaps a bow slung at his back: and his cloak of camel's hair, the covering on his dark head of kerchief or hood, or twisted shawl would be much the same. And the camel and the ass, strange companions through every Eastern journey, the humble brother in front, the garrulous burden-bearer behind, are identical. And the same is the long slow journey day by day, the same patient progress, the great soft swaying tramp of the laden beast, sinking and rising in monotonous motion, the night encampments by the little watchfire—as it is the same clear heaven and glowing stars, vibrating in intensity of light which shine over the heads of the pilgrims.

When the Passover had been celebrated with all its touching and significant rites, with the thin crackling cakes of unleavened bread, and the blood of the lamb, the sign of redemption on every lintel—all Judah, assembled for the feast, and the visitors from Israel who swelled their ranks, made a raid forth into the country to all the dependent cities and in the fervour of their faith assailed the centres of idolatry, cut down the groves and broke the images which meant not only the worship of idols but every immorality and uncleanness. It is a mission which is always congenial to a multitude,

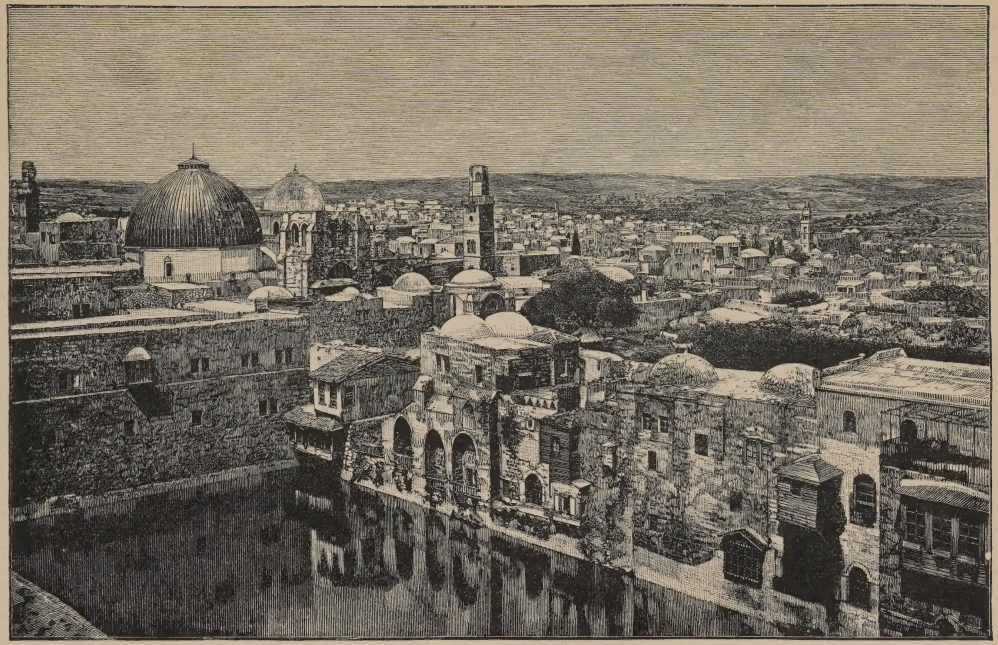
and, no doubt, the work of destruction was not only a cutting off of the accursed thing but an outlet for the pent-up excitement of so much hot popular feeling. The Israelites must have carried on the work as far as they were able as they returned to their homes, for it is recorded that it extended even into Ephraim and Manasseh. We may well believe that enough of ancient sentiment remained through the country to make a Jewish village still blush for the grove and the idol to which it gave an intermittent worship, and that many would be ashamed to resist this raid of reformation: even though they might steal back as soon as the noisy train of reformers had swept past, to pick up the fragments of the image which had not known how to defend itself, and to cherish the quick springing saplings with which nature, more capable, would soon make up her part of the mischief. We hear no more of the Passover in the days of Hezekiah, probably because it became a matter of common use and wont and demanded no further mention in the brief record which deals only with the chief features of his reign. One result of the great revival of faith was, however, that the people in the impulse of that renewed unity and devotion, offered their tithes and contributions so largely, that for the first time there was need of storehouses in which to lay up the superfluity which was so much more than enough for immediate needs.

It was not very long, however, before Judah shared the terror and disturbance which the new and great scourge of the East, the Assyrian, carried all around. King Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, had invited the aid of that great power against his familiar enemies of Damascus, and had accepted the character of a tributary and vassal: and Jerusalem, no doubt, had trembled yet exulted in its own safety as it saw the other little king-

doms round carried off into captivity by this irresistible conqueror. It must have seemed little less than foolhardiness on the part of Hezekiah, notwithstanding the victories over the Philistines with which his reign began, to withdraw the submission which his father had made. But he was, no doubt, made bold by his prosperity and prospect of regaining supremacy over all Israel, and by a strong confidence in the succour and support of God. "He rebelled against the King of Assyria and served him not" is the brief record: but it was not long before he was compelled to repent of his boldness, and renew the tribute his father had paid. Not satisfied with this compromise, however, the great Sennacherib, himself just setting forth on an expedition against Egypt, sent his general Rabshakeh to summon Jerusalem to complete submission, or in default of this to take the city, with, no doubt, the inevitable carrying away into captivity that followed. Nothing could be more picturesque or striking than the scene in which these envoys are made visible to us outside the walls of Jerusalem parleying with the representatives of the king, and shouting forth their message so that all the dismayed and eager crowds thronging every point of vantage might hear.

A great deal had been done by King Uzziah, the great-grandfather of Hezekiah, to strengthen the fortifications of his capital. He had built "towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall," all probably on that exposed portion of the city towards the north whence danger came;—all invaders down to Titus making their encampments, it would appear, about Mount Scopus, and attacking from that side. The city had sustained at least one siege in the interval, but the towers still remained, huge erections built with great stones, no doubt like those pieces of ancient wall which still remain, buildings of

which the existing Tower of David may give some idea. Hezekiah himself had "repaired the wall where it was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance." He had even diverted the course of the waters which supplied Jerusalem and stopped up the fountains, that there might be no water for the besiegers. Perhaps some of the uncouth machines "invented by cunning men to be on the towers, and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal," might still remain in their old places—means of desperate defence such as that made in later times when the Jews fought every step of their doomed town and fortress against all the strength of the Roman army —so that the town was fully fortified and as able, perhaps, to encounter a siege as any small and crowded town subject to blockade on all sides by overpowering numbers could be. But that was little even in days before artillery was invented: and the heavy hearts of the Jewish ministers may well be imagined as they went out to meet the embassy which had arrived outside the walls, at the head of some portion of Sennacherib's army, enough to frighten into submission the little royal town which could never have held head against so great an invader. Sennacherib himself was besieging Lachish in the plains, the capital of the Philistines: and there was in the mission of his general an undisguised contempt for the strength of Jerusalem, and conviction that the mere sight of the Assyrians would strike terror to the Jewish soul. "He stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field"—having apparently made a circuit to the western side of the city circling that corner, "the turning of the wall," and anxious, no doubt, to finish summarily this small piece of business, without the trouble or expense of a siege.



POOL OF HEZEKIAH.

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Whether he had tried his arguments first upon the representatives of Hezekiah before he lifted his voice, and addressed the crowd upon the walls which had come to gaze and listen to the parley, we are not told: but it is clear that he perceived the advantage of raising a popular panic and gaining the town without fighting.

"In what does Hezekiah trust?" cried the envoy—"in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt? But if thou say to me, We trust in the Lord our God—am I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it." Rabshakeh was evidently a man aware of the past history of the Jews, though making the natural mistakes of a foreigner in some important matters. He had heard of the destruction of the images by Hezekiah, and he imagined these to be images of the god of the country, the local deity—sharing in this respect the views of the enlightened critics of the nineteenth century. "Is not this he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away?" The vengeance of that god was thus on his side as well as the might of his master, and every element was combined to strike the populace with terror. The entire, yet perfectly natural, misconception in this address, and the curious difference between the great Lord of heaven and earth—of whom the dullest Jew had some conception, as a Being standing alone, eternally separate from and opposed to all the petty gods devised by the imagination of man—and the assumption of the cultivated Assyrian magnate who understood nothing better, is full of instruction. He must have supposed them a kind of infidels who had destroyed their gods in pride and defiance of all spiritual influence.

Eliakim and Shebna and Joah, the ministers of Hezekiah, listened with dismay to an address which was so

well calculated to arouse the smouldering superstitions of all that eager fringe of listeners on the walls. How easy to make them believe that the vengeance of Baal and Astarte had brought this proud invader upon them, and that these offended deities smote by his arm! They besought the Assyrian to speak in his own language, which they could understand, and not in that of the people, the hasty and incompetent judges whose panic might at any moment precipitate matters. But this very prayer was, no doubt, an inducement the more to make Rabshakeh raise his voice and strengthen his argument. "Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words?" he said, "hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall?" "They held their peace, and answered him not a word," says the record. . . . But when Hezekiah's ministers had returned within the gates they rent their garments in sign of sorrow and humiliation and with bowed heads went up among the anxious crowds of the people to lay the message of the Assyrian before the king. Hezekiah received them with equal distress and almost despair: for the fate that awaited him and his people whether they yielded or whether they resisted was equally terrible. The best that was offered was that they should be carried away "to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine"; captivity, in any case, with all the horrors which no fine promises could do away with, a fate which they had seen to overtake their brethren of Israel. In this terrible conjuncture the anxious king and his ministers could take refuge but in one hope—the aid of God—and even that with all the trouble and uncertainty which attends an appeal to the unseen, faith itself trembling even in its utmost rapture lest, perhaps, the will of the Supreme Helper might not have settled the alternative so. The unhesitating response of the Prophet

Isaiah, here first introduced into the record, when called upon to answer for the Lord, reassured, however, the trembling questioners. "I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour." With what wondering suspense must these words have been heard! for what rumour could conjure away the substantial might of the Assyrian cohort lying outside their walls?

The promise was, however, almost immediately fulfilled: for in the meantime the Assyrian envoy without the walls had heard that his master had withdrawn from the siege of Lachish to Libnah, along with a rumour of the approach of the King of Egypt with a great army which made it expedient that all the forces of Assyria should be collected together. In haste, then, intending a speedy return and meaning to make short work, when he came back, of the city, which was no more than a mouthful in comparison with the conquests of Assyria, Rabshakeh sent his ultimatum to the king. The idea of resistance in the ordinary sense of the word does not seem to have occurred as possible to the rulers of Jerusalem. Hezekiah did not call to the walls the defenders whose hearts had been melted within them by the Assyrian's defiance. There were among them men who had fought and conquered in Philistia, but the very name of the greater foe seems to have been enough to quench all courage. What the king did was to go up to the Temple, and spread out the insulting letter before the Lord. The whole narrative is full of vivid life and pathos. Classic story has no parallel for those conflicts of the weak with the mighty, those struggles in which the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, with which the literature of the Hebrew nation has leavened our imagination in these later ages. The catastrophe which followed and which for a time delivered Jerusalem from all fear of the Assyrians brings the

Hebrew record into sudden contact with the beginnings of other history without diminishing the mystery of the event or giving us any clearer understanding of it. Sennacherib and his army had marched on to conclude matters with Egypt, a foe more worthy of their steel, meaning afterwards on their homeward way to crush the little rebel Jerusalem: and had reached the Egyptian borders when the silent and instantaneous overthrow of all their forces occurred. The reader of the Bible record has generally understood that the army destroyed in a night lay outside the very walls of Jerusalem. But this is not said: indeed it is clearly intimated that there was no army lying outside Jerusalem at the time when Isaiah in the Temple proclaimed the doom of the Assyrian. It is very curious that, according to Herodotus, in the narrative given him by the priests of Memphis, the preliminaries of this destruction should be almost exactly the same, with the difference that the King of Egypt was the suppliant, and that the promise of deliverance came to him in the temple of his god, a very remarkable and somewhat confusing supplement to that of the Bible. It leaves no doubt as to the event: the explanation of it—the irruption of the field mice and their destructive work, seems somewhat fantastic; but on this point the Hebrew record gives no information. Whatever it was, it not only destroyed the bulk of his army, but cowed the spirit of Sennacherib. He returned hastily to his own country, to his great Nineveh, thinking for the moment of no more sieges or defiances of God. And, though he lived to fight in other regions before his miserable death by the hands of his own sons, never came near Jerusalem again.

The story of Hezekiah's sickness and miraculous preservation, the not very noble or generous satisfaction which he expressed in the exclamation: "There will be peace in my day" . . . are personal incidents into

which it is unnecessary to enter. Perhaps that ejaculation is not so selfish as it appears. It is a sentiment very natural to a man growing old who has had his share of the struggles and defeats of life, and who no longer feels himself able to cope with the contradictions of the wicked. Such a man will naturally breathe a sigh of satisfaction on the assurance of a tranquil ending, an evening of life disturbed by no calamity, even though he may recognise sadly that the troubles which he sees gathering round will burst on his successor. That successor will, at least, be a new man with strength to bear them, not one disheartened and worn out by many conflicts past. And this king, though a great reformer and pious man, was not a hero. Of war or fighting he can have known little, notwithstanding his successful struggle with the Philistines. No impulse of resistance seems ever to have been in his mind except against his sentence of death, for the revocation of which he pleaded passionately—a good but timid man, afraid to fight, afraid to die, though not afraid in the direct service of God to defy the superstitions into which his people had fallen, and make urgent and trenchant reformation.

It has pleased the critics to choose Hezekiah as the Pisistratus of the Hebrews, the Mæcenas of the prophets, under whom a great literary movement sprang up, and the beginning of that conspiracy and invention of a religion which it is supposed arose in his days. In the entire absence of proof it is, of course, quite simple to conjecture and assert anything of the kind, and Hezekiah might have invented the loom for anything we know, or can prove to the contrary. The only evidence for the suggestion is that a number of prophets, the majority of those whose writings are preserved to us, arose in or about his time; and that there was, in fact, during that period a great outburst of poetry, the greatest perhaps

known in history, poetry full of the sublimest sentiments and endowed with the most beautiful power of expression, besides its claim of prophetic inspiration and of opening the future to the glimpses of men. Such a great figure as Isaiah suddenly arising in a limited circle is assuredly enough,—or at least may appear so to the after historian —to put a stamp upon his age. We know, indeed, that our own great Milton, not to speak of our still greater Shakespeare, made very little immediate difference to the time in which they lived, and owed their greatness to no royal patronage. And we know also, what is perhaps more cognate to the matter, that Isaiah's writings are full of a perpetual protest against his time and appeal to a better to come, as are those of most great religious moralists and poets. But yet by right of his prophetic character he occupied, no doubt, a certain definite position, and was, we know, consulted on occasional emergencies. The fact of his existence and of that of Amos and other prophets, chiefly in fierce opposition to the course of events and the conduct of society: and one little verse in Proverbs which records the fact that the six chapters that follow "are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah King of Judah copied out" . . . are the sole evidence (the latter the only document) in proof of the theory that the time of Hezekiah was something like "the spacious times of great Elizabeth" in our own history. As for the further development of that theory which asserts very confidently that the law as well as the prophets originated in his reign, and that the whole system of the Jewish economy was invented by "the men" who copied out the proverbs, there is no evidence at all in the Bible, which contains the only contemporary information. It may be so, as anything may be of which we know nothing whatever, and have no means of knowing: and the assertion is so

far safe enough, because we cannot prove that anything did or did not originate in the age of Hezekiah: but that is all. It is seldom that a Puritan king, destroying, as no doubt he did, some advanced specimens of art in the high places of the idol worship, and probably the finest statuary of the time in the images of the idols, is at the same time a great patron of literature. But we may at least be glad that Hezekiah in this hypothesis is spared the denunciations of the artist. All we can know of him with any certainty is that he was a great reformer, that he was no general, that he was unwise in displaying all his stores and wealth of precious metal to the Assyrian ambassadors when they visited him in the way of peace, thus exciting their cupidity and inducing them to make notes of future probabilities of spoil:—and that he was very much afraid of dying and thankful to enjoy a tranquil old age, putting away from him the thought of troubles to come. This is not the picture of a very great king: and it is evident that he had not the power to amend or even overawe the society of his time, of which, as we shall hereafter see, the prophets made so gloomy a description; but he was very zealous for the framework of religion and a pious though timid man.

After Hezekiah came the long and evil reign of Manasseh, who undid almost all that his father had done, and the short one of his son, Amon, who followed that example: followed by the strong reaction of Josiah who once more enacted the part of reformer, and in whose reign "the book of the law" was found in the Temple. The critics pursuing their former theory of an elaborate conspiracy descending from age to age, assert, of course, that this book of the law was not found, but newly written, to answer the further exigencies of the time, and imposed upon the guileless king and credulous people by the high officials of the kingdom, in concert with Jere-

miah, the prophet, by whom it was written. It need scarcely be pointed out that such a consistent long-extended conspiracy is unique in the history of man, and that Jeremiah's own writings are extant, from which it may be judged whether he was likely to set his hand to a deliberate and elaborate fraud. The book of the law which thus suddenly burst upon the public of Judah was, as is asserted, the book of Deuteronomy: and we may well envy the people of that ancient time such a piece of good fortune. It is not often, nay unparalleled and without any analogy, that so great a contribution to national history, such a constitution and code of laws should be published to a people in a moment without warning or tradition. But in any case the effect it produced was great and called forth a second reformation of the same sort as that of Hezekiah, but still more thorough—the idols, restored during the two intervening reigns, being not only broken but stamped into powder, that no model for later days might remain. The previous reformation had been in the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, which lasted twenty-nine years. His son, Manasseh, reigned fifty-five, Amon two, and young Josiah, who ascended the throne at eight, may be allowed to have attained something near his majority before he carried out his work of reformation. There was thus very nearly a century between the two religious revolutions, time enough amid all the vicissitudes of the Temple for that book of the law to have been hidden and forgotten. And what, if it did not exist, nor any other recognised code, inspired the reformation of Hezekiah? but such a disturbing question does not enter into the theories of the critics.

Josiah was the last King of Israel who had any claim to greatness. One feeble youth after another of his sons succeeded him, while the disorganisation of Hebrew society, the weakness and wickedness of the people grew

under these inconsiderable princes. And outside the walls of Jerusalem reigned great and contending forces between which no little kingdom could stand: the Egyptians in whose hands one party of the Hebrews would fain have placed themselves, in the hope of escaping the other, the terrible adversary who came from the north. Anarchy and misery arose in the devoted city where no man knew what to do, and least of all the poor puppets of kings, one succeeding another, struggling between the prophets who denounced and the princes who overbore and treated them as nonentities. The question of entire destruction, in the face of an adversary so strong, and in the midst of such divided counsels, and a structure of society so entirely rotten, was, of course, but a question of time; and at length Judah fell crumbling into pieces in a complete and overwhelming disaster which had been over and over again foretold. One poor young king was carried off to Egypt, another to Babylon: and for the last of all a still more dreadful fate was reserved. The details of the catastrophe are so much more closely involved in the story of the prophets, and more fully told, that we postpone them to another chapter. It is enough to add here the virtual conclusion of the kingdom. With famine in the streets and every way of escape blockaded, the last defenders broke out "of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden," probably the slopes on the southern side under the walls of the Temple enclosure, at one end of which the king's palace was—and fled, under cover of the night, towards Jericho and the desert, leaving the deserted city to the mercy of the assailants. They were soon, however, overtaken, dispersed, and destroyed, and Zedekiah, the last king of the house of David, was dragged, a heart-broken prisoner, in the final train of the captives to Babylon, whither all that was considerable in Jerusalem, princes, officers of

state, priests and scribes, and wealthy persons, had already been despatched in melancholy bands at the pleasure of the victors. When they got as far as Riblah, probably coming up there with the victorious army, the sons of Zedekiah were murdered before his eyes, which were thereafter cruelly put out, and he himself carried off in chains to end his days in prison. Thus the kingdom of Judah came to an end.

The destruction of the city followed with a dreadful completeness. The Temple, so often assailed and raised up again, so often desecrated, where idols had been worshipped instead of God, and every kind of rebellion against the mission and purpose of the race had been carried out, was burned to the ground. "The house of the Lord, and the king's house, and every great man's house" perished one after another in those devouring flames. And the smoking ruins were left under high heaven when the noise and the tumult of the great army and its prisoners died away, a few poor inhabitants only lurking in those houses that were not worth destroying. These miserable remnants of the population would, no doubt, steal out after a while to find a silent mass of burning houses and dead men who had died in their defence, all that was left of that Jerusalem which they had so proudly celebrated in songs and sacred anthems as the joy of the whole earth.

PART II.—THE PROPHETS.

CHAPTER I.

ISAIAH.

IT is understood that all classes of critics, those who believe and receive as well as those who doubt and question, have come to a tolerably general decision that the prophecies of Isaiah should be attributed to two persons —one the Isaiah of Hezekiah, the other an altogether unknown, nameless, and untraceable man. I have made no use of this hypothesis, because it seems to me unnecessary. It is of course difficult to apply the ordinary rules of literary criticism to a work which is only known in a translation: seeing it is always possible that the style of the translators, in this case so admirable and homogeneous, may have obliterated the distinctions of the original. The restoration and return from the often-prophesied captivity is indeed more clear in the late chapters; but if it may be difficult to account for this and for the introduction of Cyrus by name, it is equally difficult to account for so much of the noblest poetry without a name: when even such scraps of verse as those of Nahum and Obadiah preserve the identity of their writers. For my own part I cannot feel that it matters much. Supposing that there was a poet of the captivity

who was willing to sink his own fame in that of his predecessor, indifferent even to "the last infirmity of noble minds," he, the evangelical prophet, as he has been called, was still farther off from the Man of Sorrows, whom he has described in such sublime strains, than the original Isaiah was from Cyrus. There is no difficulty set at rest, to my mind, by the idea that there were two:—but neither to the English reader or writer is the question one of much importance. If they are two, the world is richer by an example of such humility as it has never known before or since combined with a splendour of genius and inspiration to which the same terms may almost be applied.

The only real basis of probability upon which the conjectures in respect to Hezekiah's age as the first literary age of Hebrew history seems to rest is the fact that there was in his days a remarkable school of prophets—whether associated together or arising individually we have no way of knowing,—what we may call a great outburst of poetry, and of poetry not legendary or associated with the feats of bygone heroes as primitive poetry is in every language, but having reached a much more advanced stage, the poetry of ode and elegy, of eloquence and sentiment, concerned with every moral theme that can stir the imagination or touch the heart. The love-drama, the deep burden of philosophy, the never ending human discussion of the ways of God with men, arose all of them in this wonderfully gifted race before they were either known or thought of by any other. Those silent yet wonderful words which are writ in Egyptian stones, and which have made the thread of primitive history more or less clear, are all tersely historical, the memorials of reigns and conquests,—but the literature of the Hebrews holds everything that has ever during the whole history of the world been put into measured and

orderly words—the lyrics, the oratory, the morals, the thought, with an Eastern wealth of metaphor, with a strain and vehemence of passion, with a music and harmony of sound, which in all these centuries and millenniums have never been surpassed. The literature of the Greeks is much later, but yet it is not so universal. It does not touch every note of the harp as does that of the Hebrews—and strangely enough that great literature, the foundation of all modern learning, and in a certain sense the inspiration of the whole world, is far less acquainted with the secrets of the heart, and far less adapted to embody all aspirations and sentiments than that of the Hebrews. Socrates is great but his voice is not that of the race of mankind as is Solomon's. Even in that point the Greek is for the scholar, the Hebrew for every man. The systems of the one are the basis of learning, but the utterance of the other is the voice of the heart. The common mind which would be plagued beyond expression by the philosopher who pursued every subject to its last corner of refuge, and convicted of fallacy every received conclusion, recognises with a universal sentiment which takes something of the sting from that dreadful decision, that all is vanity. The one concerns thought alone, the other feeling. Socrates has an amused satisfaction in demolishing every stronghold that human futility has built for itself; but the emptiness of all human satisfaction is as the sigh of nature breathing from every soul. Strange to think that the poet-nation which thus almost before any expression of emotion was, divined and gave it utterance, should be now—still retaining as it does its marked and separate conditions—so voiceless, so unbeloved, odious to many, the object of admiration and enthusiasm to none. The same thing has happened to a certain degree in respect to the modern Greek, for whom the most devoted classicist

entertains no genial weakness, no impulse of indulgence for the sake of his forefathers—but is still more strong in respect to that strange people in whose words we utter our deepest emotions, and whom in most cases we repudiate and dislike. The effect is a very strange one.

The great outburst, if we may call it so, of Hebrew poetry occurred at a time when the two nations of the Jews had great vicissitudes of power and of downfall, yet as much or more of the former than of the latter. The reign of Uzziah was a great reign until the disaster of the conclusion which was rather personal to the king than affecting the people. And the reign of Hezekiah was also a great reign, full of wealth and progress, and great national deliverances, besides being, if the opinion of the critics is any way to be considered, a sort of Augustan age of literature. The twenty years occupied by the deplorable reign of Ahaz came between, it is true, justifying any kind of lamentation and presage of evil. Yet it must be remembered that throughout this whole period, at its highest as well as its lowest fortune, the tenor of the prophetic utterances, the subject of the impassionate poetical addresses which the poets of Judah and Israel poured forth are invariably the same cry against national degradation and wickedness, the same denunciation of evil to come.

Amos is the first of these great instructors and powerful Protestants against the sin around him. His prophecies were chiefly concerning Israel and were uttered in the period during which Jeroboam II., the son of Joash, reigned in Samaria and Uzziah in Jerusalem, the two reigns being contemporary for fourteen years. Thus it was in the latter years of the King of Israel, a great prince by whom according to the record "Israel was saved" from many humiliations and raised to prosperity: and in the early part of the reign of Uzziah, at the begin-

ning of a great, prosperous, and as yet unblemished career, that his prophecies were composed. All was well with the two kindred nations; over them, no doubt, as over all the other little powers in Palestine the shadow of the great Assyrian empire was beginning to rise—but for the moment Jeroboam had got the upper hand of Syria, which up to this time had been the strongest of Israel's enemies, and held Damascus captive. Nothing but well-being and prosperity seems to have existed, nothing but auguries of good fortune to come would seem natural in the circumstances. On the other hand in Judah King Uzziah was no idolater, but, till the presumptuous idea of himself burning incense in the Temple seized him, a man who "walked in the ways of his father David." Even his transgression was not such as to bring down national retribution. He was stricken in his own person, sadly enough, indeed, but not so as to affect his people. How is it, then, that the burden of the earliest as well as the later prophets is one unbroken denunciation of trouble to come, of an overwhelming reign of evil among the people, and of an approaching doom which nothing but a swift and immediate change of national habit and life could turn away? But it is wrong to say that it is unbroken—there is an alternative to the picture:—while continually repeating that immediate deliverance is still possible, if those who are exhorted to a complete change of life consent to the course pointed out to them—it is not that hope, a fallacious and unlikely one, as the most careless reader can see, upon which they dwell; it is in the far-off future of a golden age, when such a King as earth never saw was to spring from the root of Jesse, and the whole world, covered with righteousness as the waters cover the sea was to own and rejoice in his sway. In this hope, from the smallest to the greatest of these poets and prophets,

every one is agreed. Was it, perhaps, a young Hezekiah, a young Josiah of whom they fondly hoped in the first place that he might be the deliverer? but if so—and in the dim yet splendid vision that rose before them, the lines were all indefinite, and who could refuse to hope that any noble and gracious youth might unfold into that promised prince?—there is no insistence upon it, no affirmation, nor even anything that could be interpreted into an assurance that this was he. They had every inducement that men could have to make their prophecy agree with the prognostics of a new reign: but they never did so—nor did all the prosperities and splendours of the present ever draw them from their painful certainty of what was to come.

The critics, as has been said, have found it necessary to invent a second Isaiah to account for the prophecy concerning Cyrus which, according to their foregone conclusion, can only have been written after the fact: but they do not explain how it was that Amos, of whose date and authenticity no doubt is ever expressed, should in the middle of the successful reign of Jeroboam have prophesied not only the entire downfall of Israel, but the captivity which did not take place till thirty years later, and which at that moment, with a strong monarch full of conquest and triumph on the throne, must have seemed as little probable as any calamity could be. It was not without an indignant protest that these denunciations were listened to: the priest of Bethel made a stand against that prophet of evil. He reported to Jeroboam that Amos had said: "Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land." "The land is not able to bear his words," said that unquestionable witness. This incident is the fullest proof that the prediction was made at a most unlikely moment when Israel was in full prosperity under her powerful monarch. "O thou seer,"

cries the disturbed and angry priest, "flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel, for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court" (or the sanctuary and the house of the kingdom, according to the marginal correction of the authorised version). "I was no prophet," answers Amos, "neither was I a prophet's son. I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flocks, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." The same message with individual modifications is conveyed by all the prophets of the day. In Micah there seems a hope, his message being addressed to Israel alone, that in Judah the people of God might find shelter and peace; but the prophets of Judah convey the same tremendous menace to their half of the separated nation. Captivity and desolation when they were at the height of national prosperity and success! The historical record describes territories extended, acquisitions made, new fortifications, new strength. Uzziah has cunning engines mounted upon his new towers, Hezekiah makes still more elaborate preparations for defence; and both these monarchs extend their borders, and increase their wealth. But through all the busy and rich and gay city peals the same cry of alarm—captivity! something more terrible than defeat or that adverse fortune which they have met like their neighbours for hundreds of years, now beaten down, now rising up, in the vicissitudes of war, and that perpetual life of conflict which is natural to a small kingdom surrounded by ambitious and warlike neighbours. From Solomon's days there had been, perhaps, no king so hopeful, so powerful as Uzziah, and no reformer so happy, with so much reason to look for assured comfort and well-being as Hezekiah. Assyria had not even

arisen in the days of the first monarch to make Palestine tremble; yet even in Judah was the trumpet of coming disaster sounded, "The cities shall be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."

Who could wonder if this terrible prophecy was as madness in the ears of the prosperous and powerful Hebrews, "in the year when King Uzziah died?" The city was full of comfort and enjoyment, festivity and national well-being. Tribute and quit-rent came flowing in, luxury had found a place in many homes, no city of Palestine was more forward in the march of civilisation, more advanced in fashion, more likely to take the lead among the surrounding nations. Captivity, desolation, cities without inhabitants, without a man left, the forlorn women clinging to any defender they could find, imploring to have the protection of his name—what did the madman mean? Were these follies of weight enough to disturb a single banquet, to make either prince or moneylender pause? The populace, always ready to entertain any grumbler, might listen with that satisfied thrill of excitement with which the populace everywhere hears its superiors threatened:—but who would give up a dinner, who would sacrifice an advantage, who would restore a pledge, for anything these wild fellows might choose to say? The Cassandras of fate are comprehensible enough when the downward course has visibly begun, and the enemy is at the gates; but he who threatens thunder out of a clear sky is less intelligible. In Isaiah's time there were even special signs of God's favour, troubles averted, deliverances given, yet without any cessation of the warning. Nay, there were all the signs of outward piety in one portion of Isaiah's time. There were continual sacrifices, offerings at the altar, a great religious system care-

fully carried on—yet still the same cry. The prophets unfold to us the state of morals and manners which existed in both the fated kingdoms with a sternness of censure which, no doubt, to their contemporaries, seemed exaggerated, such a trenchant "criticism of life" as even Mr. Matthew Arnold could not have dreamed.

It should always be remembered, however, that the utterances of Hebrew prophets and preachers were not addressed to individuals but to the nation. The absence of all reference to after rewards and punishments and the compensations of another life, remarkable as it is, would be more remarkable still were these utterances recorded for the comfort of the immediate sufferer, the support of the troubled individual, as in Gospel times. Christianity does emphatically address the individual, but in the Jewish dispensation it was not so. It is the fate of the nation which is always the subject of the prophet. The poor man whom our Lord adjured with heavenly tenderness to "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me" is not contemplated by the seer who flings abroad with the vehemence of passion his addresses to his race. Israel had been set as a wonder in the earth, Judah as a sign to all nations, and they had disregarded, scorned, and departed from their mission. Not even the address, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth" of Solomon is in the thoughts of Amos or Isaiah. To them, too, perhaps, as to Elijah in his despair, it may have been communicated that there yet remained seven thousand men in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. These faithful ones were in God's own hand, in the secret of His heavenly consolations. Whatever might happen to them it was well with them—whatever might happen to the others individually, was also the secret of God and in His hand. But it is to the nation that the prophet's message is addressed, that nation which had

been set up as a witness and had forgotten and abjured its testimony. Its special existence depended altogether upon its fulfilment of that trust. Its national life was an office, a service. From time to time fitfully that office had been filled and that service performed more or less well—now with enthusiasm so that all the world might see—now languidly with doubtful arms and swaying banners. And anon the standard of the Lord had been precipitated into the dust and the mission of Israel had been forgotten. This it was which was the object of the prophets, the burden of every message. A country, a nation has no hereafter; its duties are to be accomplished now and here, its rewards or punishments awarded in this world—and such is the only thought in the prophet's mind. He lays bare the corruption of the nation with an unsparing hand. The king is a good king; he has made reformation, he has walked in the ways of his father David—for him and for his day there will be a postponement, an arrest of justice; but the nation is corrupt and condemned, and has abandoned and become incapable of performing its great mission. The experiment which has been tried in the face of all nations has failed. "Israel will not know, My people will not consider." One last outcry of warning, the greatest, the most continuous ever made, for a time filling the very air with its manifold voice giving the echoes no rest, is to complete the record of God's ceaseless endeavours to induce His chosen people to fulfil their office—but that like every other is to be in vain.

I do not doubt that the very humblest thinker forms some theory to himself, for the most part in silence, unexpressed—myriads who have no words in which to set forth their thoughts justifying or accusing the great Ruler of the world according to their different imperfect reasonings upon what they see and what they cannot see.

Among these humble hosts without authority, whose musings are incomplete and their conclusions framed without any thought of scientific accuracy, I may venture to put forth my conviction that the freedom of the human will is so complete that God will force no one, neither individual, neither nation into the right way. With the strongest belief that this world contains but a portion of our existence, that it may be for aught we know a great parable and lesson for the myriads of other worlds which we know to be around us in space: and without any attempt to enter upon that bewildering certainty that the result of every man's decision must be known beforehand and from all eternity, by the God to whom a thousand years is as one day, I believe that in no way will the Creator force the steps of His creatures. What to the simplest apprehension is compulsory goodness? a thing without merit, if not a mere hypocrisy which is the most common though unjust view—but always, at least, a thing suspect, satisfactory to no man. Against this, which is the very prerogative and privilege of humanity, the theorist, and often the most lovable of theorists, gnashes his teeth, in many cases taking it as a reason for denying God altogether. Can a great and pure and loving Being exist, and permit the crimes and miseries that devastate the earth, they cry with passion, and so great a show of tenderness superior to that of God, and mercy above that of the All-merciful, that many tongues are silenced—and it is perhaps the most popular of all atheistical arguments. What, then, do these indignant critics demand? a race cut to conformity with the model of goodness, a man in leading strings so that he cannot err?—and of what good, then, of what meaning would be his virtue? The God of Israel, the God of Christianity, that most perfect of all the conceptions of men of the one Being who is inexplainable and

incomprehensible, yet is always more or less understood by the heart, lays the case very plainly before every one of His creatures. To the lowest intelligence, as to the highest, there is a standard, a line which divides between good and evil. There are a hundred arguments on either side, and the case has been gone over and over again since the beginning of the world in every generation under all circumstances. And many a breaking heart has cried and implored in every age for the one thing that cannot be granted, that God would force child or friend or husband or wife into that right way, would annihilate the perverse will, and destroy the disobedient instincts, and make men good who have no desire to be good. It seems to me that this is the everlasting No of which the philosopher writes. God who has such pity as a father hath, supplies every argument, every inducement that can affect a thinking and loving being; but He will not take away that power of choice which is the man's distinction in the universe, nor force the soul to obey Him. The mortal father follows humbly, without knowing it, in pain and sorrow, this same sole practice. With man it is dictated indeed by the force of things, by the impossibility of compelling another mind into any way which it does not itself choose; but with God I venture to believe it is the great secret which explains all that is inexplainable. The way is clear, be it to the savage, be it to the sage:—the infinite Pity watches over all and in many a silent moment enforces unseen the open lesson—but leaves in this world the inalienable liberty which men have as men: to be exchanged, let us hope, in another sphere, for that soft irresistible constraining which the love of Christ exercises even in this life, and which there may be, we trust, the universal rule.

This is a digression, and the expression of an individual

thought. But as it is impossible to avoid forming individual theories upon matters which concern us all so deeply, I hope the reader will pardon the momentary departure from our immediate subject. On these lines, at least, the great parable of the Jewish history was carried out. Their mission was set very clearly before them, the highest honour conceivable for a nation: their law, so stern in rectitude, yet accompanied with such wonderful shadings of charity and kindness, was given to them centuries before any such code is known in any other race (and this on the showing of the most determined critics, who impute a system of wholesale imposition to the leaders of the tribes, yet cannot deny the antiquity of certain fragments, and these the most essential of their code): and that well-spring of poetry which was their privilege and distinction, entirely inspired by religious themes and motives, sprang up in their midst with extraordinary fulness before the most ancient ballad or list of names is recorded of any other people, with the exception of the hieroglyphics of Egypt. In all these ways did God endeavour to persuade that people to fulfil its mission. But the resistance of an unsubdued human will, and the lower inducements which had more force upon them than the higher, and, perhaps, even that weakness of human nature to which a lofty strain of purpose is always exhausting, overcame every better impulse. The Hebrews seem to have asked themselves from the beginning of their national career why they should have been chosen for this, and why they should be bound to follow that higher purpose: why they should be different from other men, why they should not eat and drink and content themselves with the common course, the feasts and license of their neighbours. Perhaps there were some who thought such an assumption of superiority arrogant and intolerable, who preferred

to share the lot of those about them to whom their purer creed would seem a standing reproach. To take their chance with their neighbours instead of assuming airs of sanctity,—might not that be a thought not ungenerous, attractive, indeed, as more magnanimous than any self-salvation to many minds? and the always powerful current of custom round, and the shallow poetry of an Astarte and Baal more cognate to the multitude than the Diviner strains, recommended by aboriginal wives and mothers, and by constant sight and association, must have appealed to all the lighter impulses of the soul. The charm of idol worship is one which the modern mind is quite incapable of understanding; yet it is evident that it must have been great; and the Hebrews were alone in that worship which forbade any graven image, and tasked the powers of the mind to imagine a great Spirit everywhere expanded, yet nowhere seen, who demanded not external rites so much as righteousness and truth, and held out no reward of pleasure, but denounced and denied the gratification of the senses as evil and not good. This rôle in the world was too high for the race; and yet it pleased their pride to dally with it, to be thus distinguished among other men; and they would seem to have had a certain superstitious reliance upon the protection of a God who, for His own credit, so to speak, would not allow them to be overcome, even while they rejected every bond of duty towards Him. It is to this people that the prophets address all their entreaties and warnings. Theirs is no individual appeal calling upon every man to repent. The threatenings of Divine justice are for the nation, for which there is no future retribution, which has to accomplish its warfare as a nation upon the earth and to undergo the recompense of final national apostasy, the penalty of national destruction. I do not say that the absence of all but

strong inference—such a cry as "Whom have I in heaven but Thee," the cry still of the most devout spirit—of the world beyond the grave is not remarkable throughout the Old Testament: but that in the impassioned utterances of the prophets it would be inappropriate and is not to be looked for, since it is the corporate body to which all their remonstrances and menaces are addressed, the Jewish nation, in its general system and economy, an economy essentially mortal and earthly, made to run its course on the earth as a system, of which there was no promise nor any indication that it could ever be transferred to another state of being.

The state of Hebrew society is made clear to us, within the formulas of the national history by this succession of great poets. How the foundations of primitive law, the immemorial commands of Divine charity were broken, and that which was to be the reproach of the Jew through all ages begun, is already one of the first things revealed to us. "They lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge." What more curious description could be made of the race which is the money-lender of all humanity, the pawnbroker of all the ages! It had not been denied to the primitive Hebrew to exercise this all-congenial trade. He had been allowed to accept the garment in pledge, the upper cloak which a man did not require at his work, for the day during which he was working: and, no doubt, it was implied if not absolutely expressed that the borrower should pay out of his day's wages the sum lent and reclaim his garment. But in no case was it allowed by the law, payment or no payment, that the pledge should be retained. The garment was not only the completion of the workman's attire by day, but it was his covering by night; and the commandment is as express and distinct as "Thou shalt not steal" that it should be restored to

him. "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?" The Shylock of modern history has put this charge far out of his ken, and so had the Hebrew of the days of the last Jeroboam. They lay down upon clothes laid to pledge —what we call now the Arab cloak, which is his house, his cover from the scorching sun, his bed and blanket in which he still lies down secure under any tent or tree wherever it may chance to him to pass the night. The poor man, unable to bring his penny of redemption, must have shivered in the night air in his light tunic while the traditionary Jew, the impersonation of the usurer, stretched himself in the most primitive form of warehousing, on the coverings of his debtors—the cruellest form of pawnbroking. The next item in the indictment follows closely upon this. "They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes." What but bondage and slavery remained for the unfortunate from whom his all was thus taken? Bondage, too, was permitted in such a case, that a man should work out his debt, but not that he should be sold by his countrymen, his kinsmen. Thus one of the greatest offences of the race, an organised and systematic breach of the law, is denounced by Amos. The Hebrew instinct had been foreseen and guarded against in that law with its special and strict enactments; but here it appears in full and flagrant operation, open to the eye of day.

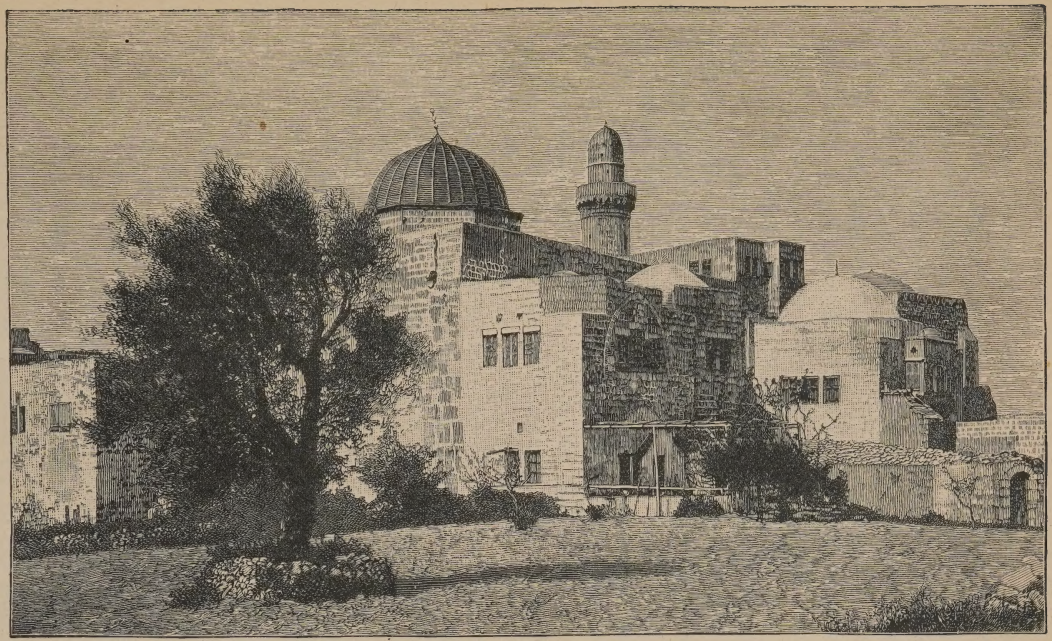
Such an example has a more picturesque and convincing effect than the more general condemnations of oppression, of misprision of justice, of the taking of bribes, and the falsification of judgment, all of which the prophets declare to be common in Israel as is the idolatry which is the cause of all. It would seem, however,

in the midst both of idolatry and law-breaking, that the Israelites continued to give a certain worship to God in conjunction with their idols: for the prophet indignantly exclaims against the meat offerings and burnt offerings which God will not accept, which were offered to him in shameful combination with the offerings made to Jeroboam's calves at Gilgal, and to the other false gods after whom Israel had gone. Not this impulse of superstition and terror, but judgment and righteousness is what God requires of them, that they should "hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate."

Not less striking is the picture of a dissolute and corrupt society, which the prophet finds indifferently in both the capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem. "Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant (or quaver, a significant correction, and one which throws a certain light upon the primitive music of the time) to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments." Curiously enough this imputation of luxury and self-indulgence, especially in wine, is repeated in almost all these terrible and vivid pictures of evil. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue till night till wine inflame them!" says Isaiah. It is an unlikely reproach for the sober East, but it is so often repeated that it must point to a fatal weakness of the time. "Mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink," says another passage. "Which justify the wicked for money, and take away the righteousness of the righteous!" A society depraved and corrupt in

which that craving for money to supply their luxuries which is so constant a feature of a falling state, leads to every kind of injustice and oppression: where the cause of the weak is unsafe, peculation in every public office, the very hand of the judge not clean: where ostentation and luxury prevail, the women's special prodigality of dress calling forth an indignant protest as in all other primitive indictments, the men's indolent effeminacy, their vacant lives, and pursuit of pleasure reckless and boundless, filling in the details of the picture. Cruelty and oppression appear on all sides, exactions of all kinds, extravagance and self-indulgence, the prophets prophesying falsely and the people loving to have it so: the courts of law debased, the lender turned into a usurer, the debtor threatened with slavery, a society altogether disorganised, without effective authority, without rule, pervaded by license and a slackening of all bonds.

But in its very depravity and corruption what a picture of supposed security is here! There are no gatherings for defence, no attempts to rouse the ancient spirit. The picture is like that of the depraved Romans in the last stage of the empire, or of Sardanapalus in his court. The princes stretched out upon their couches, at their long drawn-out luxurious repasts, with all the foreign affectations that have come to them from Egypt or from among the millionaires of Tyre: touching a careless viol, quavering a song of loves: keeping all straight with heaven perhaps by a hecatomb of burnt offering at which they would assemble their friends to eat a morsel of the sacrifice, and propitiate the God who could be so easily kept in good humour by the smoke that offended their dainty nostrils:—then straying forth by Solomon's beautiful gate, where perhaps their mules, or the fine-limbed desert horses, which were the last word of Hebrew lux-



DAVID'S TOMB, JERUSALEM.

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ury, waited at the gate, to take them across the valley in a party of mingled pleasure and devotion, and up the slope of Olivet to some favourite grove, where half clandestine, half recognised, the gayer rites of another worship were performed. Nothing like being on the safe side, one can imagine the cynic nobles saying, as they came back to envelop themselves in their silken robes, and lay themselves upon their sculptured couches with all the fine work of ivory and gilding:—while steward and intendant outside ground every farthing that could be got out of the misery of the needy, out of the prodigal's greedy want and the shivering poor man who had given his cloak for the pleasure of a rude debauch.

Was this Israel, was this Judah, the chosen of the Lord?—was this the hill of Zion, so often re-consecrated to God where the solemn processions had passed but now from hilltop to hilltop, celebrating a renewed covenant? The prophets cry their accusations aloud in every marketplace, at every gate, while still these songs of sacred joy have scarcely died out of the echoes. The mission of Amos was accomplished in two brilliant reigns, that of Jeroboam II., and that of Uzziah. And the Assyrian was not yet known in his day. And yet his burden is captivity, captivity! not punishment or calamity alone, which came from time to time in the shape of the all-devouring locust, God's army, or in tempests and convulsions of nature: but destruction complete and hopeless, the carrying away into a strange country, the loss of name and fame as an independent nation. What wonder that the land could not bear his words? What did he mean, this herdsman in his sheepskin, with his wild looks and fiery eyes? Captivity! when all was well in Israel: when Damascus had been brought under tribute and all the north: when the kingdom was stronger than it had been for generations, enriched by all the wealth

of the cornfields of Esdraelon, the fisheries of Galilee, the little ports upon the margin of the great sea. Yet for all this "Israel shall be captive in a strange land." When he was hunted forth across the border into Judah, even then his voice was not silenced. And that promise to bring back again the captivity of Israel, what did it mean? and to build again the tabernacle of David upon which no one had attempted to lift up a profane hand?

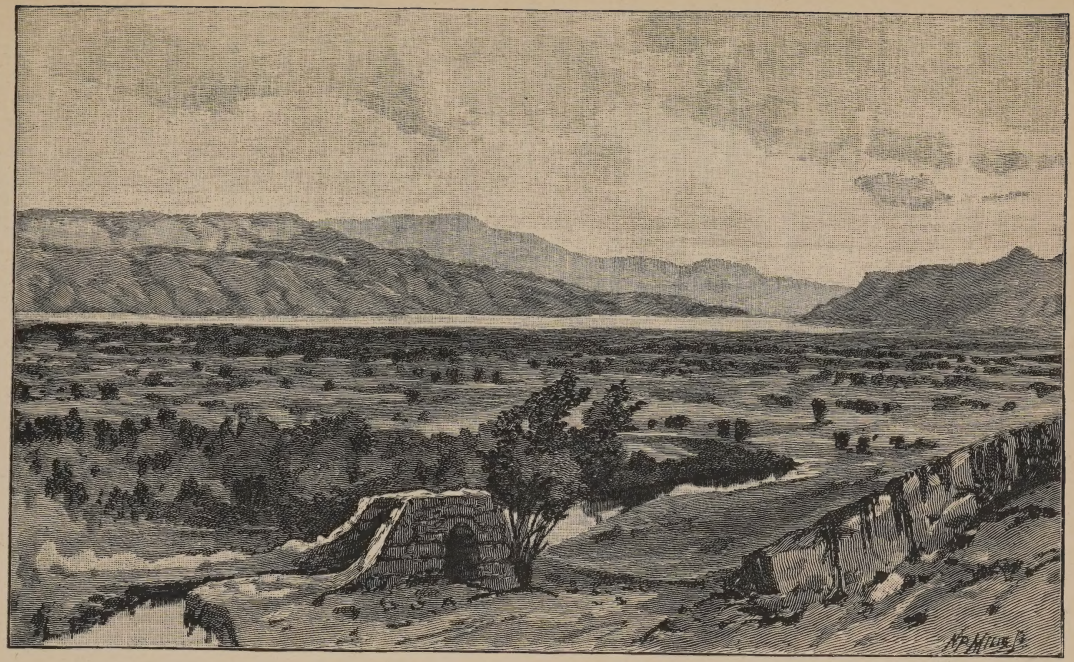
It was more natural that during the reign of Ahaz, when everything was overturned and the king himself profaned the altar and closed the Temple, these cries of warning should resound over the land. But Hezekiah and his reformations seemed scarcely to have silenced for a moment these melancholy predictions of evil to come. Isaiah was a man who had seen many changes in Israel. The ecstatic trance in which he saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and that mystic and splendid vision of the seraphs and their six wings, "with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly" (which I have heard a physiologist explain as in accordance with the structure of the human body and capable of being realised in it in some future purification of form, a devout imagination with which the old doctor pleased his fancy), happened in the year in which King Uzziah died. Jotham reigned sixteen years and his son Ahaz sixteen, so that when the reign and the reformation of Hezekiah their son and grandson came, the prophet must have been at least beyond his prime. He had seen the most wonderful revolutions in Jerusalem. He had seen conquest and triumph, the wealth of captured cities carried across the great bridge to be laid up in the house of the Lord: and anon a rage of destruction in that sacred place, the spoils carried away, the golden lining stripped from the walls, the Temple left desolate. And then the whirligig of time had turned

and he had beheld the restoration, the re-dedication, a reverent bringing back of still greater glory. He had seen siege after siege, the humiliation of the city before the power of Damascus, its conquest by the King of Israel, thousands of captives dragged from their homes, but coming back again in the sudden compunction of the conquerors moved by old brotherhood and kindness, notwithstanding the severance and enmity of years. The mind of the prophet must have been in itself a chronicle full of the vicissitudes of national life. And he was one of the greatest poets that had arisen in Israel, a man full of high genius and the noblest powers. Between him and David there had arisen no such exquisite voice of song, no such large and splendid inspiration. Fire from the altar had touched his lips. If any man was capable of beholding the seraphim and even the glory of the Lord upon his throne, this was the man. In his great poem or collection of poems there is no monotony of denunciation. His harp has many strings. The most triumphant measure as well as the saddest is congenial to his great voice. He is capable of the irony of the satirist and the sweetness of the pastoral: he has forestalled Dante and given to Milton a keynote beyond that great poet's compass. The hell of his vision is more grand than that of the Florentine, his heaven far more splendid than that of the English poet: his song falls from the height of sombre grandeur to that

> "Sound as of a hidden brook
> In the leafy month of June,"

which Coleridge has described and exemplified as one of the most exquisite expedients of poetic art—but not with such grace and sweetness as Isaiah. The portrait of the falling race, so true to many a last stage of empire since, is not more clear in those dark lines of woe and misery

than is the triumphant vision of a time to come in which all that is joyful shall return under the reign of the Prince of Peace, the root and the offspring of David, the King whose name is Wonderful. He turns from one scene to another with the freshness of a noble faculty to which monotony is impossible, which from the depths of humiliation bursts glorious into the deliverance to come, and cannot be confined to one note. In his early years he is like the wild Ezekiel among the miserable exodus of the captivity, a sort of natural sign and parable to the people, he and his wife "the prophetess" and his children: but in his elder age he is the king's counsellor, a distinguished member of Jewish society, the representative of all that is highest in religion. It is to him the troubled statesmen go when they have met Rabshakeh at the gate and have not been able to keep his insolent message from the rabble that crowded the walls, that foolish rabble thoughtful of nothing but its own safety which might so easily make a disastrous panic within and force the hand of the king and his advisers, and precipitate destruction. And it is he who dissipates those fears, who calms the terrors of the crowd, and gives a tremulous confidence to the threatened city:—to be followed by how profound an impression when the news comes of that astounding and incomprehensible catastrophe which swept Sennacherib's army from the face of the earth, and reduced his power in a moment. How extraordinary, we say! surely enough to impress for ever upon the minds of the most frivolous people the conviction that Isaiah's warnings must be true, that his entreaties and adjurations were worthy of all their attention, that what was said by the prophet, so tremendously attested by God, was as trustworthy when he threatened punishment as when he promised deliverance: and so it ought to have been by all human analogy, and so by all



JERICHO AND THE DEAD SEA.

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human example it was not. The awe, the solemn impression, the extraordinary relief in a moment to all the terrors of the threatened city died with the day that brought them forth, and the human routine went on as before. So it has been in every age: and so it will be, no doubt, till the race comes to an end, or some other impulse higher than any known heretofore gives a higher possibility, an alteration beyond all hopes to the well-known and long-established "way of the world."

It is strange to imagine this great and remarkable individual amid the crowded life of the ancient Jerusalem. Amos and the other prophets were of different mould. The herdsman taken from following his flock frequented the woodland sanctuaries of Bethel, roaming by the wayside, meeting the pilgrims who went and came, one of the outdoor crowd, proclaiming his message to all the winds, a wild figure of the sort that had never been unknown in Israel, a rhapsodist, a wandering minstrel—but with something more exciting still than the story-telling of the East, a message which was, indeed, to all, but which the crowd of the needy and poor would, no doubt, eagerly appropriate to their betters, with that invariable satisfaction in the denunciation which is natural to every crowd. In the beginning of his career in the later days of Uzziah and the confused and miserable reign of Ahaz there are similar features in the aspect of Isaiah. In those strange bold symbolisms of fate, by which he makes his own domestic life a parable, and audaciously dates his prophecy of the destruction of the conspiring powers which had brought trouble to Judah, by the birth and growth of his child—Isaiah adopts the most tremendous practical method of bringing his predictions home to his hearers. His son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "in making speed to the spoil he hasteneth the prey" (hasteneth the moment when he shall himself be

the prey?), was not in existence at the time of the prophecy. The prophet had just taken to himself that bride who is afterwards spoken of as the prophetess. It was when the King of Syria and the King of Israel had made their raid upon Judah, destroying the fenced cities round about, and carrying away many captives, chiefly it would seem from the valley of Jordan towards Jericho; and Jerusalem, naked of these advanced posts, trembled for the moment when the triumphant army should appear under her own walls—that these espousals would seem to have taken place. Two witnesses were chosen by the prophet to record the exact date. "For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria." A strange test and a bold, belonging to the language of symbol and fact which is always so impressive to the primitive mind. The whole city must have known that extraordinary wager with Providence. And when the news came that the great Assyrian from Nineveh—that distant wonderful city of which it was already known in story and in song that a prophet of the Hebrews had been unwillingly sent to warn it of its wickedness—had appeared in the north, calling back the Syrian king in hot haste to defend his capital; and when a little later terror-stricken messengers brought the report that the hordes of that distant and dimly apprehended power had swept away Israel from Samaria, till there was left only the poorest leavings—"As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear," according to the simile of Amos—with what awe-struck wonder must the inhabitants of the city have gathered round the prophet's door, and watched the little dark-eyed child stammering forth the Lo and Ammi, the first syllables of baby speech. In this way it seems Isaiah established his authenticity

before his race: with great indecency, M. Renan and other critics say, but that is scarcely the question. It is an incident that might occur even now, though probably not with the same universal publicity, in the same unchanged and unchangeable land.

And was it, perhaps, at the same early period that he stood—in one of those characteristic openings of the steep dark street where the crowd that gathered to listen would establish itself as in a theatre in the narrow depth of that ravine of building, each line of glowing turban or kerchief threaded with gold, rising a little higher than the other; and with the viol in his hand which was capable of serious as well as frivolous use, sang in the hearing of half Jerusalem "a song to my wellbeloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard." Did the crowd expect it to be no more than a song of loves, a variation upon the old familiar theme? Did those who knew the singer best pluck at their neighbours' elbows, and bid the more serious pause because of the moral that must be in it, though the beginning sounded like mere poetry?

> "My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:
> And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
> And planted it with the choicest vine,
> And built a tower in the midst of it,
> And made a winepress therein. . . .
>
> "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem,
> O men of Judah,
> Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. . . ."

Would there be some who would start and shift and disturb the crowd, suspecting the unwelcome message that was to come? and some who would press nearer hoping, perhaps, to exercise their sharp wits on a question of casuistry, or to hear a tale of oppression, perhaps a tirade against some patrician, or a piece of veiled and piquant treason such as the mob loves?

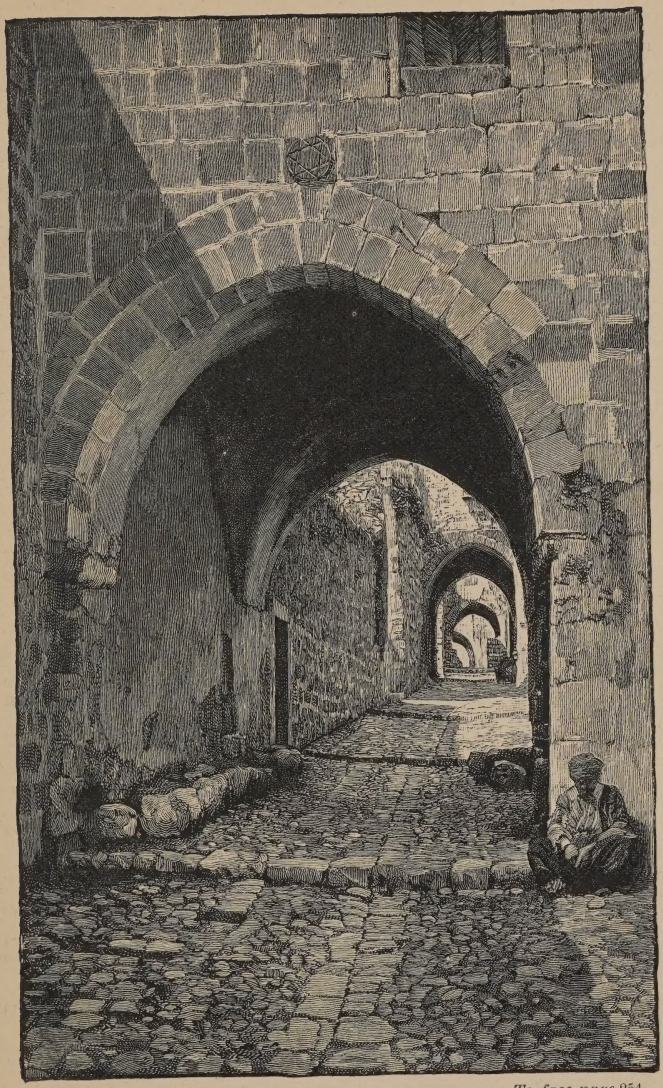
"What could have been done more to my vineyard,
That I have not done in it?
Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,
Brought it forth wild grapes?

"And now go to;
I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard:
I will take away the hedge thereof,
And it shall be eaten up;
And break down the wall thereof,
And it shall be trodden down:
And I will lay it waste:
It shall not be pruned, nor digged;
But there shall come up briars and thorns:
I will also command the clouds
That they rain no rain upon it."

Then, one can fancy the louder note struck from the instrument, the pause of the singer, the stir in the multitude —

"For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts
Is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah
Are the plant of His pleasure. . . ."

One of the most wonderful of those early odes of Isaiah is the wild and terrible song with its burden "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still" in which vengeance is denounced against a power scarcely yet known. By the guidance at once of the subject matter of the poem, and of the date which precedes a briefer lyric, it would seem to have been written or rather delivered during the reign of Ahaz. All Jerusalem which had lately trembled for the advance of the allied armies of Samaria and Damascus, "Rezin and Remaliah's son": and whom Isaiah had reassured not only by prophecy but by the curious limit of time during which that prophecy and their destruction was to be accomplished: had after a moment's exultation and relief begun again to apprehend the approach of a greater danger in the still more powerful conqueror from the north, who had overthrown its



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A STREET IN JERUSALEM.

enemies; the Assyrian whom the King of Judah had been so unwise as to call to his aid, not perceiving that he himself and his little kingdom must be the next mouthful to that potentate, a far more dangerous opponent than the other little kings with whom there had always been a give and take of neighbourly warfare, victories and reprisals going on from generation to generation. Assyria meant nothing less than to sweep the whole stretch of that rich historic country—the little territory which yet held an importance altogether incommensurate with its area, the country which included that mystic sacred Temple and kingdom of Solomon, of which all the existing world had heard, the dynasty which had lasted in lineal succession for two hundred years—as well as the great and important seaport Tyre, and many other rich cities full of spoil. There would, no doubt, be men in Jerusalem who could perceive and understand the ambition of this new empire, far more vast and with much larger aims than had any of the surrounding kingdoms of Palestine, an empire which destroyed and depopulated, not one whose incursions in one generation could be repaid by the next as was the use and wont of Palestine. And, perhaps, even the one threatening troublous visit which Tiglath-pileser had made to his trembling *protégé* Ahaz, had impressed even the populace, after their brief exultation in the removal of their immediate enemies, with an uneasy sense of that great potentate behind, who could crush Judah when he pleased still more easily than he had crushed Israel.

It was probably in some special outburst of this smouldering panic that the prophet came out to his door, or took his stand in the great highway between the city of David and the Temple, the opening where Solomon's great bridge crossed the valley, or some other public place; and declaimed once more his message, "Thus

saith the Lord." How that many-coloured Eastern crowd would swarm down every rocky lane and steep street to hear what this message was, eager as all crowds are to hear something new, more eager still because of the tremendous fulfilment of his last great commission and the general conviction, tempered by practical scepticism, that God spoke by His prophet. One can scarcely doubt that the little symbolic child, the infant whose baby stammerings had marked the time in which his father's prediction was to be verified, was somewhere by, clinging to the prophet's robe, looking out with childish eyes accustomed to the stare of the wondering crowd, and to the sound of the great voice that pealed over his head. What was it that this bold prophet had to proclaim—the destruction perhaps of some other poor little kingdom by the great world conqueror? No! but the destruction of that conqueror himself: vast Babylon, a wonder in the mystic depths of distance, a golden city, miraculous in her extent, her wealth and greatness: and her sublime emperor who defied even God Himself, who had laughed at all the gods of the nations, who had devoured race after race like a cluster of grapes, to whose following and armies there was no end. The Assyrian! that name of fear! What had the prophet to say of this avenger, this universal victor, whose power overawed all the known world? In the little capital of this small kingdom, a speck among the hills, amid a people terrified and helpless, debased by effeminacy and fear, no longer the mighty men of the heroic ages, this Hebrew stood up and poured forth the voice of his vision.

"Ho, Assyria, the rod of Mine anger,
The staff in his hand is Mine indignation.
I will send him against a hypocritical nation,
And against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge,
To take the spoil,
And to take the prey,
And to tread them down
Like the mire in the streets.

"Howbeit he meaneth not so,
Neither does his heart think so.

"For he saith,
By the strength of my hand I have done it,
And by my wisdom; for I am prudent:
I have removed the bounds of the people,
I have put down the inhabitants
Like a valiant man. . . .

"Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?
Shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?
As if the rod should shake them that lift it up,
Or the staff against that (the hand) which is not wood."

We can only pause here to note how the prophet bursts forth in the midst of this discourse, as of many others, into that great proclamation of final deliverance which throughout all seems to seize him from time to time by an overmastering force, carrying him far beyond the partial and temporary deliverances which are his immediate subject, transporting him into a changed world which in his inspired rhapsody is near at hand as to-morrow, the everlasting day-spring, the fulfilment of all promises. So full is his mind with that hope, that it bursts from him whenever he pauses to take breath, raising no doubt a bewildering excitement in the mind of all these eager listeners who had heard vaguely of a Messiah, a great King, all their lives, and who would recognise in the uplifted eyes, the illuminated face, the change of voice, that the orator had been swept away into that subject most congenial to him. He returns to his present theme with a sigh, a sob of altered utterance. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Hosts, O My people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian." No, not even when he comes, when his hosts pour over the country, when the terrified posts bring news of his advance day by day, and imagination paints his progress over the desolated country.

"He is come to Aiath,
He is passed to Migron;
At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages:
They are gone over the passage:
They have taken up their lodging at Geba;
Ramah is afraid;
Gibeah of Saul is fled.
Cry shrill with thy voice, O daughter of Gallim:
Listen, O Laish! thou poor Anathoth.
Madmenah is scattered;
The inhabitants of Gebim gather to flee.

"This very day he will halt at Nob:
He will shake his hand
Against the mount of the daughter of Zion,
Against the hill of Jerusalem."

This is as who should say, the invader is landed at Dover, he has abandoned his ships, he has passed Canterbury and Rochester, the men of Kent have forsaken their villages, he has set up his camp at Woolwich and threatens London. It is in imagination that the prophet sees this terrible advance. But the trembling hearers knew that it was a thing that might happen any day. It did happen when Rabshakeh and his party made their way, their master to follow as soon as he had completed the siege of Lachish—to the gates of Jerusalem. But—

"Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts,
Shall lop the bough:
The high ones shall be hewn down,
The haughty shall be humbled.

"He shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron,
And Lebanon shall fall
By one that is mighty."

More distinct and detailed is the burden of Babylon which follows, in which her utter destruction is the theme, and the Medes in their fierce disinterestedness,[1] "which

[1] I take from the commentary of Dr. Payne Smith the remarkable note, "Xenophon makes Cyrus speak to the Medes of not having joined him from a desire of money."

shall not regard silver," rise up pitiless before our eyes: and still more wonderful is the vision in which the prophet, suddenly rapt as is his characteristic from the more practical and immediate scope of his poem, and plunged with an overwhelming force of impulse into the future and the unseen, tears aside the dark veil of Hades and displays the great dead, the monarchs of the past, rising to meet the fallen conqueror—

"Hell from beneath is moved for thee
To meet thee at thy coming:
It stirreth up the dead for thee,
Even all the chief ones of the earth:
It hath raised up from their thrones
All the kings of the nations.

"All they shall speak and say unto thee,
Art thou also become weak as we?
Art thou become like unto us?

"Thy pomp is brought down to the grave,
And the noise of thy viols:
The worm is spread under thee
And the worms cover thee.

"How art thou fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How art thou cut down to the ground,
Which didst weaken the nations!

"They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee,
And consider thee,
Is this the man that made the earth to tremble,
That did shake kingdoms?

"That made the world as a wilderness,
And destroyed the cities thereof;
That opened not the house of his prisoners?"

One may imagine how years after, when Sennacherib's great army perished, and all the immediate alarms of the Hebrews were silenced in a moment by the great news, and the messengers were surrounded with excited crowds from every street to hear each detail of that unhoped-for

deliverance—Isaiah's great ode which had been listened to in its first utterance with troubled and wondering incomprehension, may have been taken out from among the other rolls of mystic writing and read with an understanding and awed acknowledgment, of its tremendous truth. Sennacherib's fall was not the final meaning of that prophecy, yet it might well have seemed so, a presage and preface. Hezekiah no doubt had heard it proclaimed, when he was a boy, in his father's troubled and disastrous reign, when, perhaps, the utmost that was thought of it was that it was an imaginative speculation, a vision of what might be if ever that great and conquering power should fall. In the same way, I believe, it was applied to Napoleon in the time of his glory. And it can scarcely be believed that there were not men in Judah who were capable of feeling the force of the poetry and upon whose memory that picture of Hades had imprinted itself with the vividness of youthful recollection. When the first wonder, the first stunned and startled sensation, the rapture of exultation in their deliverance were somewhat abated, would not they bethink themselves—was there not something we have heard, a poem beginning "Hades is moved" a vision that made the heart beat? Surely it was of the Assyrian the prophet spoke? Isaiah in these latter days was no longer, perhaps, the minstrel prophet who had declaimed his warnings and his promises in the public places, who had walked barefoot as a sign and symbol, whose child had been the measure of predicted time. He was the councillor of the king, the man to whom even the politicians made their resort when their difficulties were overwhelming, the great and acknowledged instructor as well as the most wonderful poet that was known in Jerusalem. Did some gay deputation of young lords pour into his chamber, all joy and tumult, more sceptical than believing, rousing him from

those great dreams of the Deliverer to come, on which all his being was intent, bidding him come and read to the king that old thing of his, which the old men were talking of, that vision, or whatever it might be, of Hades? Let him arise and bring it forth and read to the king. And with what awe would Hezekiah listen, in his timid faithfulness, for whom Hades would never be disturbed, whose hope was for peace in his own day whatever might follow, and perhaps a humble slipping into heaven at the end, no king, but the least of God's servants. No exultation, no cry of triumph was in that poem, but the awe of a great judgment and a great suffering, a vast and dim unseen world where there was neither fire nor flame, but a great suspense. Dante has nothing so splendid in all his sublime *Inferno*.

Isaiah grew old like other men. He lived through four reigns and filled Jerusalem with his voice: and poured forth, pealing through those deep streets, such songs as had never been heard among them save in the first splendid age of national consolidation. There had been wandering poets of lesser note in sheepskin and camel's hair out of the wilderness, a herdsman like Amos, wild and strange in the fatigue of his flight, banished out of Israel for his words that troubled the land; or a sudden apparition undistinguished even by his father's name, Nahum the Elkoshite, Micah the Morasthite, appearing like meteors, passing across the busy background of common life, listened to for a moment by the rushing crowd ever eager for song or story, and never unwilling to hear what terrors were denounced against its neighbours of the northern kingdom. But Isaiah must have been as well known to Jerusalem as the towers of Millo, or the pillars of the Temple; and in his old age a certain change had come over his great voice. Probably he came forth no longer to declaim his

message, to give expression to the confusion and terror of the popular heart as when the whole city was stirred to listen for every rumour of those dreadful deeds that were being enacted in Samaria, and his cry "Watchman, what of the night?" pealed into every soul. He was now abiding in his house, an old man, rapt more and more in the heavenly vision, in those strong consolations which God had provided for the faithful among his people; yet still by times moved by what was going on around, pouring forth his denunciations upon the sins of Jerusalem, the extortion, the injustice, the cruelty of men who made their appearance daily at the Temple services and attempted in their folly and wickedness to flatter the great God with sacrifices, as if the smoke of their offerings might keep Him from seeing the burdens which they bound upon the poor and feeble. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen?" he cried with indignant wrath and irony, "a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" And when the gentle Hezekiah died he poured forth his tribute of lamentation:—not to mourn for him; for why should the old prophet mourn for a good man removed, taken away from the evil to come? "He shall enter into peace": but yet it was heavy on the patriot spirit to see that "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart" and that now once more is the time for "the sons of the sorceress" to lift up their heads under the new reign, which is that of a child, destined in his time to be one of the worst of Judah's kings.

All these things does Isaiah remark in his seclusion with a profound and indignant sorrow. Nor does he for-

get his cry of "Woe to Babylon" nor the doom which he has already so often denounced upon that still powerful and splendid city, to which the seat of power of the Assyrian empire was to be transferred, and whose final action as the scourge in God's hand was yet to be carried out against Jerusalem, from which the danger had been averted by the destruction of Sennacherib, but only for a time. The wonderful details of the destruction denounced upon Babylon, that come in, as if seen by a gleam of lightning in the confused atmosphere of disaster—the iron gates unbarred, the two-leaved gates, a particular also proclaimed by Nahum, with that sudden touch of precision in the mist and rolling clouds of prophetic rhapsody which recur so often—and the indication of Cyrus by name as at once the destroyer of the Assyrian power, and the deliverer of Judah—are so extraordinary that it is only natural that critics to whom in their denial of all that is supernatural this would be a deathblow, should contend violently for a second Isaiah, not the prophet we know but another, an equally great poet, but without so much as a sign of his passage through the crowd. These things, however, though they have so much importance in history, are but accidental, so to speak, the asides of the great revelation in which the old prophet's whole soul is absorbed: which is that of the Messiah, the King of Righteousness, the Son of David, of whom and for whom all the promises of the establishment of David's throne had been made. That glorious prospect which rose upon him in the quiet of his age while all the conflicts raged without, transported Isaiah by times into those old fervours of prophetic ecstasy which are so characteristic of his splendid manhood and passionate height of inspiration. He who proclaimed trouble and distress so often, who even in his promise of immediate deliverance had not concealed a darker day

to come, breaks forth anon into cries of joy that thrill the air. Or if the reader pleases it is now the new Isaiah, the poet of the restoration who speaks.

"Awake, awake;
Put on thy strength, O Zion;
Put on thy beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city!
Shake thyself from the dust;
Arise, O Jerusalem:
Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,
O captive daughter of Zion.

"How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
That publisheth peace;
That bringeth good tidings,
That publisheth salvation;
That saith unto Zion,
Thy God reigneth!

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice;
With the voice together shall they sing:
For they shall see eye to eye,
When the Lord shall bring again Zion.

"Break forth into joy,
Sing together,
Ye waste places of Jerusalem:
For the Lord hath comforted his people,
He hath redeemed Jerusalem.

"The Lord hath made bare His holy arm
In the eyes of all the nations;
And all the ends of the earth
Shall see the salvation of our God."

By whom was this glory to come, this joy so far transcending everything that eye has seen or ear heard or the heart of man conceived—not the salvation of Judah alone but of all the ends of the earth, crowding round her as the holy city? It is by the King that shall reign in righteousness, the new branch which shall spring out of the root of Jesse, "My Servant" called by Jehovah, "Him in whom my soul delighteth." And of what

manner of being is this Holy One of Israel? This is what Isaiah asks, in vision, in high and wonderful poetic musings, "searching," as St. Peter explained long after, "what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in him did signify." What did it signify? Something too strange for belief, too wonderful for the most authentic vision. Was he but dimly conscious what it meant? did he believe it allegorical, a similitude, a spiritual picture, not a fact to be verified in every detail? or did he cry out like Peter and the rest, "Be it far from thee, Lord!" in the first anguish and comprehension of what they meant, those wonderful words?

"He is despised and rejected of men;
A man of sorrows,
And acquainted with grief:
And we hid as it were our faces from him;
He was despised,
And we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows:
Yet we did esteem him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned every one to his own way;
But the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
Yet he opened not his mouth:
He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
So he opened not his mouth.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment:
And who shall declare his generation?
For he was cut off out of the land of living:
For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

"And he made his grave with the wicked,
And with a rich man in his death;
Because he had done no violence,
Neither was any deceit found in his mouth.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him;
He hath put him to grief:
When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
He shall see his seed,
He shall prolong his days,
And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

When it burst upon Isaiah that this wonderful description, rising line by line to his poet lips, concerned the King, the Saviour, the God with us, of his own long-past prophecy, did the old man fall upon his face before the Lord and cry "Not so, not so!" But the prophet has no longer anything to say of himself. It is not his now to undo the sandal from his foot and the sackcloth from his loins until these things should come to pass. Far off in the distance in times unknown lay this tragedy so fully told, so unmistakable. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: he saw it and was glad." But was not Isaiah rather glad that not to his eyes except in vision should this anguish be? Be it far from thee, Lord! so we should all have cried had we been in that secret. What imagination of man could have dreamed of a Deliverer like this? And was it, perhaps, with some vain human thought of averting that Sufferer's pain that the old man at the end of his career flung up his arms to heaven and cried as so many since then have done after him "O that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might dissolve at thy presence!" Oh that thou wouldest so burst forth upon the world in manifest majesty, in glory that no man could gainsay, that the stubborn race might be convinced once for all in spite of itself! Who has not consciously or unconsciously echoed that prayer? but not such are the ways of God.

There is an old, old tree, supported by props of piled stones, still standing near the waters of Siloam in the valley of Hinnom, at the foot of Moriah—a hoary and venerable tree like an old man in the last decrepitude of age, under which, according to local tradition, Isaiah was cruelly put to death by King Manasseh, the successor of the good Hezekiah—sawn asunder says the legend. He must have been so old that, let us hope, the hands of the executioners shook the feeble life out of him before the atrocities began. Is the old mulberry-tree the descendant of some tree that saw that terrible deed accomplished? for tradition is very tenacious in those strange unchanging countries. At all events it bears the most pathetic resemblance to the oldest of conceivable old men—and as such may be accepted as a natural monument to the old poet who has provided us with many of the most glorious imaginations that have ever passed through the mind of man, and whom we have known in his impassioned youth and vehement manhood as well as in his old age, a wonder and a splendour in the earth.

We might ask, supposing that Cyrus was added by an anonymous contemporary, what hand pictured forth the Man of Sorrows? and how did even he, the imaginary Isaiah of the captivity, know of that Divine Sufferer that was to be—yet was not to be for many hundreds of years? Cyrus is a trifle in comparison. But this is no place for vain argument.

CHAPTER II.

JEREMIAH.

A PERIOD of about sixty years elapsed between the end of Isaiah's career and the beginning of that of Jeremiah—a period in which there were the usual vicissitudes, the fall, and the reaction which are so universal in Jewish history. Manasseh, who had succeeded to the throne as a child, became wildly profligate in his manhood and adopted the most cruel and abominable superstitions, until, presumably in his later years, trouble came upon him, and the humiliation of being dragged to Babylon in the train of the conqueror brought tardy conviction and penitence to his heart. This foretaste of the destruction that was to come would seem to have sobered and startled the rulers of Israel: for Josiah his grandson, after the brief reign of his son Amon, must have been brought up in the fear of God, since his earliest acts are those of reformation, a reformation more thorough-going than any that had preceded it, and fondly hoped, it would seem, to have been decisive: since the idols, with the fierceness of a vengeance upon those senseless things which is very human and natural, were ground to powder, thus securing that they should never be raised up again. Notwithstanding in the fourteenth year of this good king's reign, while these reformations were going on, the voice of warning was again raised in

Jerusalem, and this time with a force which exceeded all previous threatenings in the unbroken terror of its denunciations, as the events about to take place exceeded all others in their misery.

When Jeremiah began his prophecies Josiah his contemporary was twenty-two, a young man strongly imbued with religious feeling, and anxious to conform his kingdom to the regulations of its ancient worship. Judah however by this time shared the diminished condition of every other little kingdom round, overshadowed by the great Assyrian, and retaining its separate existence only by his forbearance. It was diminished in prestige if not in actual power: its borders had already been devastated again and again, its frontier cities taken, and its very capital visited by the conqueror. It would not seem, however, that these disasters had seriously affected the people, at least in a moral point of view. There had, indeed, already arisen in that small stronghold and sanctuary of national life among the hills, an Egyptian party, hoping to find in that great power, itself just springing into vigour again after defeat and humiliation, an ally who could defend them from the Assyrian: just as there was in the Scotland of the Reformation an English party much recommended by reason, but highly objectionable to national feeling: the Egyptian party in the former case being one to which the king himself was strongly opposed.

At the same time there existed a still more visible conflict, the struggle of the king to bring about such a revolution of feeling as might still save his nation, but working almost alone with the aid of a "clerical party," perhaps; though the priesthood, too, seems to have been supine, only able to effectuate any reform by the initiative of the king —and the country entirely indifferent to any such esoteric way of defending itself, intent upon other methods, on get-

ting more warlike races to fight its battles, on securing by diplomacy its exemption from those evils which had already overwhelmed so many little nations under its eyes. King Josiah's idea that a reform of morals could have any effect on the position of affairs was, no doubt, folly and fanaticism in the eyes of his chiefs and captains, as well as in those of the people generally, a devout imagination worthy of the most benighted times. No doubt they turned with contemptuous impatience from such suggestions, which might suit the old world, but were far too antiquated and *arrière* for them, and lamented the Puritanism which occupied itself with cutting down pleasant trees, and burning many fine examples of Phœnician art in the way of deities, when it ought to have been framing useful treaties and making alliances of a profitable kind in preparation for confronting the Assyrian. On the contrary Josiah, it would seem, was faithful to the treaty made with the Assyrian whose tributary Judah had been from the time his grandfather, Manasseh, figured among the captive kings at Babylon.

In those days a young priest of the highest rank—the son of Hilkiah, the high priest, as generally believed—very different in station and breeding from the other prophets who had made the air resound with their outcries in the former generations—a young man, no doubt full of all the learning of the time; was suddenly visited by that mysterious impulse which like other breathings of the spirit went where it listed, calling one here and one there by an irresistible call. The young priest was consecrated to God's service, yet not in so strange and terrible a way—and his spirit failed him when this vocation came upon him. "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child," he cried. He had not the innocent unconsciousness of the child-prophet in

the ancient tabernacle, the young Samuel who answered, "Here I am" in the same simple faith to his master on earth and his Master in heaven. Jeremiah, from his youth, must have had a melancholy and troubled spirit, feeling to the depths of his heart the uneasy condition of all about him, the seething of all the disorderly elements, the decomposition of the national life. He shrank in his timidity and sadness from the terrible task put upon him. He had not the splendid and fiery eloquence of Isaiah, the impetus of genius and energy which carried that prophet, swift and triumphant, to the heights and depths of his subject whatever that might be. And the rapid dramatic succession of terror and deliverance, the parables, the songs, the visions, the infinite variety of his predecessor were not his. He could play but on one string, in one key, touching the mournful notes of lamentation, descending to the deep bass of despair, but rarely rising to any happier tone. Indeed there was little to move him that way. The sweep and impulse of the stream, nearing the rapids, the growing velocity of a course which was always downward, and in which there was every day more certainty that it could never now be arrested, was all around him —and his message was the heaviest given to man, the proclamation of opportunities lost and never to be recovered, of judgment no longer to be averted, of punishment beyond reprieve. Other prophets had amid all their darkest auguries a gleam of light. It had still been possible for the fated people to change their own destiny, to turn aside disaster, to stay their own steps in the evil way. But now the time of possibility was almost over. "Gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an

iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, and the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

What a charge was this for the trembling youth in his linen ephod, with his timid habits of the cloister, so to speak, the Temple courts, the service of the altars. All against him—kings, and princes, priests, and people—and he to stand and proclaim the anathema upon them all! "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem." His father, the high priest, head of that troubled hierarchy, so often dismissed with obliquity, so often hastily brought together again from their hiding-places, to reorganise the national worship—with what terror he must have seen his son separate himself from the other harmless neophytes, thrust himself forward to the gaze and gape of the people defying all the powers that were! Most likely the office of the prophet was never a popular one: but how much less popular now when there was nothing to say but evil, nothing to promise but destruction. And it was not enough that this chosen messenger of doom should put down his predictions upon the parchment, and write them on a roll. Not so easily as this, in the quiet of his own chamber within hearing of the songs of the Temple, with the soothing routine of religious rites dividing the hours—was his task to be accomplished. "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there his word, and say: Hear the word of the Lord all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord." The whole scene comes before us in these words, as all Jerusalem lay before him: the crest of Millo, the town of David, the tomb upon the height that covered the remains of Israel's greatest kings. Across the deep

cleft of the valley under the Temple wall he could see the steep streets pouring down their crowds towards the gates and the open country beyond; while across the great bridges streamed the devout and the formal, and the fringe of idlers and curious persons coming towards the Temple. He was no orator, "behold, I cannot speak." He had not the confidence of the wild herdsman from Tekoa in his sackcloth and sheepskin whom nobody knew, and who might babble as he would to a mob of strangers without any personal committal or compromise. But Jeremiah was well known—the high priest's son, a patrician youth, yet one of whom all might say, how dared he to put himself forward, a mere boy, presuming on his father's office, and on the favour of his kinsfolk? No wonder that he hesitated and held back: —yet the impulse was too mighty to be resisted. "I am pained at the very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace: because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war." "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem," cries the young envoy delivering the message of the Lord, and throwing out his hands to those streets with all their visible crowds, "and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." Once more the argument of Abraham is brought forth, recalled in its impassioned prayer and pleading to his descendants. "If ye can find a man . . . I will pardon it." "Surely," the prophet replies in his pleading, "these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me to the great men, and will speak to them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God." But it is a hopeless quest: as it was in Sodom and Gommorah

so it is now with Jerusalem. Even now, at this last moment, the promise and the offer are repeated. If you can find a man:—but the man is not to be found. Is there, then, no longer the remnant, the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal? These remain always, but hidden in the depths, in the secret places—timid souls, perhaps, overcome by the tide of wickedness, without influence in the guidance of the people, without courage or strength to strive against the overwhelming current. But the nation as a nation hurries on, without thought of her high commission, her place in the world, feasting in the gay despair of the epicurean because there is no hope and to-morrow we die: or striving in the eagerness of statesmanship at its wit's end, to find some foreign prop against the invader: or with a still more characteristic sordid instinct, the hunger of that grasping greed and love of acquisition which was to be their reproach to the latest ages, spoiling every man his needy friend, his starving brother to add a little more to his guilty stores. Zedekiah, perhaps, the last King of Israel, was one of that remnant, too weak to stem the tide, sitting helpless in his palace, sorrowfully extending a little private protection to the prophet, unable to contend with the princes who surrounded him—a good man in all his innermost relations, but not the Man: not one who could stand up strong against a host, and hold the standard of justice and truth.

We are, however, when the prophet's mission begins, still far from that tragic moment: and once more it is in a time of partial prosperity that it is first proclaimed. The young king had but lately made his reformation, and in the restoration and clearing out of the Temple the books of the law had been found. It is the opinion of the critics, as has been said, in the elaborate system

of pious frauds by which they conceive the religion of the Jews to have been instituted, that Jeremiah wrote this book of the law, and that Hilkiah, the high priest, found it where he had himself hid it, a fiction of the most elaborate character, outdoing any simple device of the kind that the world has known. There have been such attempts made in our own century: but Mr. Ireland who invented a new play for Shakespeare had short shrift, and even the hapless Chatterton though a poet could carry on his deception but a very short time. But this trick was perfectly successful the German gentlemen think, though Jeremiah must have been still a youth, not recovered out of his first fright and panic when he accomplished this great piece of work if their guess was correct: besides being a young cheat and dishonourable lad without any truth in him, though his life was made, as we know, a misery to him in consequence of his search for truth and denunciation of falsehood. Such arguments, however, being only those of nature and of all literary as well as human analogy, have no effect upon the theory which is built upon a foregone conclusion. But there is not the slightest reason, according to nature and the sole record which even touches upon the subject, to believe that Jeremiah was a hypocrite and impostor, and that all his supposed zeal for truth and purity was an elaborate falsehood, the worst and most dreadful of lies. To think of such a steadfastly maintained, never-avowed deception, in the presence of that sad and persecuted man, oppressed by the weight of his prophetic burden, struggling against it, remonstrating with his God who had made him a messenger of woe, yet carried on by the impulse within him which was more strong than all the rebellions of the flesh —is a sin against every indication of humanity, a shameful wrong and insult to an honourable name. For there

is neither prevarication nor sign of deceit in this sorrowful soul. He is not sympathetic like Isaiah, he does not make the heart beat or the spirit rise. It is sometimes a complaint of exquisite pathos which falls from his lips, a lament that penetrates to the very soul; but it is always a lament, always a voice of sorrow with which he speaks, touching the saddest minor keys, breathing forth the melody of desolation, the hush, the faltering dying notes of despair. It is true that he, too, knows of the better hope, the Deliverer who is to come, the final triumph: and here and there bursts forth into a solitary shout of the great Branch of David, the King who shall reign and prosper, whose name shall be called the Lord our Righteousness: but he has not the heart to dwell upon that prospect. He knows of it to save him from despair; but his spirit has not elasticity enough to rise to the height of a triumphant proclamation. He is made to perform one symbolical act by buying a field from his cousin, to prove his absolute faith in the return of the captivity. And he proclaims over again the destruction of Babylon with the same minute and vivid touches of reality which we have already seen: but his first message is to his kindred, a message of woe.

When he stood in the gate—shortly after the restoration of the Temple, it was the most tremendous indictment which with his still tremulous uncertain voice he proclaimed against Jerusalem, "Will ye," he cries, always in the name of his Master, "steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord." He re-

sumes with stern and simple details which bring before us a sudden glimpse of the idolatrous city as if cut with a diamond. "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. Do they provoke Me to anger? saith the Lord: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?" The stern gravity of the rebuke that follows, the sorrowful indignation of the Almighty Spectator, before whom this constant human mistake of His great intention is perpetually recurring, is in the highest tone of remonstrance, worthy the Divine speaker if ever human words were.

"For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you."

How often had these remonstrances been made already? What to God were the cattle on a thousand hills? the smoke of their sacrifices was an offence to Him being devoid of all meaning. What were these rites, without the heart to understand and to obey? And now that the service of God was performed as if He were one among many, to share the superstitious observances of a people from whom all knowledge of a spiritual worship had departed, the last word of warning had been spoken. And now nothing but doom remained behind.

This doom it was Jeremiah's mournful mission to pro-

claim without ceasing. It was not with his own will that he did it. Again and again does he mourn his cruel fate, cursing the hour that he was born, upbraiding God himself for having put this yoke upon his shoulders, with that wild audacity of suffering which breaks forth so often in the weak. "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was enticed," *i.e.* to deliver this painful unwilling message, he cries: "thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. I said I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary of forbearing, and I could not stay." Thus, notwithstanding all dark looks, all threats directed against him, and no doubt the restraints which his respectable kindred both in Jerusalem and Anathoth would attempt to enforce, nothing stayed the melancholy messenger, who was there in all the assemblies of the people, a shadow upon every brief rejoicing, an unyielding monitor monotonous in the continued warning, which his melancholy countenance uttered even when his voice was silent. Sometimes he calls upon the pastoral people coming up to the markets with their produce to abandon their tents and villages and collect in the defenced cities: sometimes he describes the progress of that fierce nation from the north coming up from Dan with a snorting of horses, till the whole land trembles: sometimes imitates the wild and confused cries of those upon whom this sudden destruction falls: sometimes describes in words of fire the desolate country without inhabitants, the land lying waste, the silent evacuated houses, the fields in which there is no voice of cattle, the streets from which every sound of life has fled. "For the land shall be desolate." And sometimes as he takes his stand not far from the Temple gates, whence all the people coming and going must have heard the

voice which had become so familiar, Jeremiah pours forth his lament with that individual voice, with that strong cry of personal anguish, which is the most convincing of all.

> "Oh that my head were waters,
> And mine eyes a fountain of tears,
> That I might weep day and night
> For the slain of the daughter of my people!
>
> "Oh that I had in the wilderness
> A lodging place of wayfaring men;
> That I might leave my people,
> And go from them!
> For they be all adulterers,
> An assembly of treacherous men."

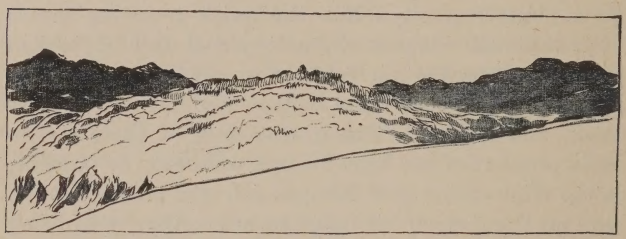
It is no wonder, perhaps, that the men of Anathoth, when the mournful prophet went down to his father's farm and terrified the herdsmen and labourers with this cry of evil to come, should have risen up against him: nor is it wonderful that the authorities of Jerusalem interfered to prevent the proclamation of the message, not only at the gate of the Temple which even a cynical non-believer or all-believer which was much the same thing—would allow to be privileged ground:—but at the city gates where the crowd resorted, by which the king went and came, and even at the very palace doors where his presence could not be ignored. If it were not that the habit of hearing him brought in the indifference of familiarity, what could be so intolerable as that perpetual promise of evil, "Except ye amend": while to amend was the last thing this doomed people thought of. They had evidently made everything right as they thought with God by giving Him his share with the others, the lowing cattle, the bleating sheep, the smoke of the sacrifice—coarse primitive worship, not so refined as that gayer service of the queen of heaven to whom cakes and dried offerings sufficed, but still an easy tribute enough

to keep Him in good humour since that was what He required. And this fellow for ever about the streets, hindering every function of life, stirring up old superstitions among the common people, mutely assented to by the devotees who shut themselves up in their houses and took no share in public life—must have become insupportable to the rulers of Jerusalem. He was a man, too, of rank who could not be hustled away, the son of an exalted personage, with many friends and connections who, though they might not approve of him, would be irritated by any disrespect paid to him. And it is easy to imagine that the sight of his white figure in the priest's dress, conspicuous amid the many-coloured crowd, would be a sight at once exasperating and alarming to every official. To see the passengers arrested in the open space outside the gate, the country folk open-mouthed with wonder, the ear even of the officer of the guard himself caught by that voice: to trace him through the streets to the convenient place where he would pause and pour forth his burden, to know that no hour and no place was safe from these continual interruptions, must have been more than ordinary patience could bear. If they hoped to make any lengthened defence when the invasion did come, which everybody knew must come, then these perpetual auguries of evil would steal the very heart out of the defenders of Jerusalem: if they desired to forget as long as possible the inevitable danger, and to snatch a fearful joy from the ominous tranquillity while it lasted, the sound of that prophetic lamentation would disturb every feast. Who could touch the careless viol and sing of love or war when every passing breeze brought in the echo of that other voice whose song was nothing but woe? who could make up his books in peace, and lay aside his pledges, and count his riches, while at his very threshold the

prophet might be standing? The wonder is not that he was seized and punished at last, but that his freedom from insult and injury lasted so long.

It is only after we have been made to hear the long series of prophecies, modified, indeed, in word by the repeated promise of salvation should repentance be shown—which, however, the prophet does not expect in his sorrowful experience of the temper and habits of his people: and after we have seen him for years vaguely appearing at city or at Temple gateway, proclaiming his message: that he comes fully forth into the historical record in a manner confusing indeed to the reader who finds himself plunged into the quick recurring scenes of a chronicle without chronology and full of broken sequences, chapter xx. relating events which occurred four years later than those that are set forth in chapter xxvii., and so forth. The greater part of these melancholy prophesies had been uttered, wonderful to imagine, in the reign of the good King Josiah who had, no doubt, used all the force of his influence and authority to bring about the desired reformation, yet with little more effect upon the people than to turn their idolatry into an enlarged pantheistic system, taking in the God of their fathers as one among the crowd of deities who peopled their harsh Olympus. But when Josiah, happily for himself, found an honourable death in battle at Megiddo, a new age, a changed cycle began. That king was the last of the kings of Judah with any power or consistent kingdom worthy of the name. Others had paid tribute and acknowledged servitude. Josiah himself was probably no better than a vassal of the Assyrian, and when he rashly met the forces of Egypt did so in a chivalrous fidelity to his bond, to stem the tide of that other great empire which was threatening his suzerain. But after him the whole economy of the Hebrew kingdom was in

solution: the young sons whom he had left behind to meet the emergency were wholly unfit to face its difficulties, and probably the wisest and bravest of his counsellors and champions perished with him at Megiddo, leaving Judah as Scotland was after Flodden, defenceless, at the mercy of the conqueror. The son who succeeded him, Jehoahaz, not the eldest in age but probably the child of a mother of superior rank, had a precarious reign of three months during which time Pharaoh Necho became master of the kingdom and city, exacted an enormous indemnity, and dethroned and carried off the



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youth (old enough, however, at twenty-three to have made a stand for his country had it been in him), raising an elder brother under the name of Jehoiakim to the insignificant throne. This period of trouble and misery has little place in the record: no doubt the city was but a scene of disorder, fugitives coming and going, the unhappy remnants of the army who had fled from Megiddo: and conflicting, miserable discussions going on, whether to attempt any resistance to the invader or to leave him to enter at his will—which is evidently what was done in the want of any fit head or trustworthy defence. But Jehoiakim had a little more promise, it would appear, of stability: and sad though it must have been to see

the captives who were led away in the train of the conquering Pharaoh, the unfortunate young king and so many of his princes and attendants as that potentate chose, yet there must have been a great moment of relief in the national breast when the last dark Egyptian band disappeared, and the exhausted and bereaved country was left a little to itself. What would the new king do? Would he prove another Josiah and lead a more effectual reformation? Would he at last carry the people back towards Him in whom the only hope of Israel lay? or would he relapse into the painful intrigues of a small state toppling over towards destruction, clutching desperately again at the skirts of Egypt, who was so little like to confront the hordes of the north unless it served her own purpose, to rescue any dependent principality?

It must have very soon been proved to the eyes of those who were eagerly on the lookout for any sign of penitence that Jehoiakim had no heroic intentions. And in the beginning of his reign, Jeremiah, silent for a time as may be supposed in the grief of his heart, occupied with the mourning for Josiah, chanting the lamentation which he made over the fallen king, "the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord," or unable to gain a hearing in the anarchy of those three terrible months before the Egyptians had marched away: comes forth once more to the court of the Lord's house to address the people coming up to worship and call upon them again to repent. His message this time is like a stroke with a spear, sharp, sudden, and penetrating. God commands him not to diminish a word of the doom he is commissioned to pronounce. Once more the opportunity is held out, the call given to obedience and reformation. But "if ye will not hearken," cries the prophet, throwing forth his arms towards the historic Temple, so often spoiled, so often restored, polluted, and desecrated, yet by this time

certainly the pride even of those who defiled it, a national distinction and glory: "If ye will not hearken . . . I will make this house like Shiloh, I will make this city a curse among all the nations of the earth." The crowd had no difficulty in understanding his words. It was from Shiloh that the Ark had been carried forth to procure, like a fetish, the triumph of the Israelites, who had come to look upon it as the heathens looked upon their gods of wood and stone: it had been disastrously lost in the lost battle: and Shiloh had become Ichabod, a place from whence the glory had departed. This prophecy, so appalling, so definite, so clearly comprehensible, produced an immediate tumult in the crowd: they were no longer under the sway of the pious King who protected the prophets; they were no longer afraid to raise their voices or their heads in the presence of their victors. Masters for the moment of their own city, free to do what they would, with many an unsettled score of resentment against this prophet of evil, the first outcry of the angry priests against him lit up the excitement of the people into fury. How dared he to say that this house should be as Shiloh? The priests seized upon the audacious speaker, the angry crowd clustered round him. "Death" was the universal cry, the fierce impulse of the uncontrollable multitude, their first word as soon as they had the power, as when hundreds of years later they cried "Crucify him." The noise of the sudden tumult reached the "princes," the secular authorities of the country, as they came up from the king's house, perhaps from a palace on the site of Solomon's palace within the enclosure of the Temple, perhaps from the city of David where his ancient house had been: most probably the former, where they would be near at hand and no tumult could escape their notice. They went and took their seats in the entry of the new gate, which was the eastern or sun

gate, perhaps that now called the Golden Gate (so carefully built up to prevent the entrance of Messiah, when he comes in modern Mohammedan times) and called to the rioters to bring the prisoner before them. What had he done? The priests answered with an outcry "He is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye (the cloud of witnesses round) have heard with your ears." Jeremiah answered for himself, undaunted before those grave judges in whose hands, at least, he was safer than in those of the enraged mob. "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this people all the words ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent Him of the evil that He hath pronounced against you. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth meet and right to you."

When he had thus seized the opportunity to repeat his message, he awaited, with a courage which could scarcely have been looked for from his downcast and heavy spirit, the decision of his judges, who were not always so merciful to him as now. They were, perhaps, alarmed at the thought of how far the popular rage might go were it to be permitted such a victim, and they pronounced the prophet innocent: "for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God." In this they were backed up by certain "elders of the people," tribunes one may suppose of the humbler sort, old men who had seen other such sights, who reminded the crowd how Micah the Morasthite had prophesied in the days of Hezekiah that Zion should be as a ploughed field and Jerusalem as heaps, yet had not been silenced or punished, but on the contrary turned many people to repentance. Was it some old sage nearly a century old, at the last flicker of mortal life, who came tottering through the crowd from where

he had been sunning himself on the steps of the Temple, to tell that tale, as a thing he could himself recollect? At all events Jeremiah's protectors were more powerful than those who were against him and for the time he went free.

After this events would seem to have followed each other quickly in the prophet's life and in that of the doomed nation. It was still early in Jehoiakim's reign when Jeremiah was bidden to use for the first time the symbolism so common with the prophets. His teaching up to this time had been confined to words alone: now he was to employ one of the most trenchant images ever held forth as a picture before the eyes of the unlearned. He was commanded to go down to the potter's house to watch that most interesting and oldest of all industries. So bold and so telling is the simile that it is impossible to see now that operation, so little changed, the lump of clay in the potter's hand, the flying rustle of his wheel, the absolute power he has over his material, making one vessel to honour and another to dishonour, without an almost awe of the simple and beautiful labour so extraordinarily adapted to the metaphor, more conspicuous and convincing than any force of words, the oldest of all human crafts, which no new invention has ever done away with. The potters carried on their labours in the opening of the valley towards the south where Hinnom and Jehoshaphat join. Was this local habitation perhaps a relic of the time when the Phœnicians formed their colony at Siloam, bringing with them all the plastic arts? for the sheds of the potter must have filled the declivity at the foot of the village on its rocky shelves. To be sure the art of the potter is too primitive and universal to be introduced by strangers, and the presence of the necessary clay and the pools close at hand are enough to account for the workshops on that particular spot.

Jeremiah must have come from the Temple, probably by that new gate where he had just been tried for his life, and down the slopes of Moriah to where pleasant Kedron ran in the bottom of the valley, and followed the stream to the southern end where Absalom's tower rose up to point the way. No doubt there were devout followers who would not miss a movement of the prophet, who would point to each other the way he had taken and go after him: and no doubt also angry enemies eager to catch him in his talk, and devoted in hate as the others in love to every trace of his footsteps. There could be no more pleasant walk about Jerusalem than that path by the purling of the little river under the olive-trees: Olivet rising gently green on one side, the slopes of Moriah crowned with the fortifications and the shining roofs and towers of temple and palace, on the other. But it is scarcely possible that Jeremiah can have had a great audience in that spot so far out of the town. His sad musing would be half to himself, a conning over, perhaps, of the lesson to be proclaimed after to the people in their throngs at the public gate: but it was impressed upon the memories of these few followers by the significant vision, the symbolical work carried on before their eyes.

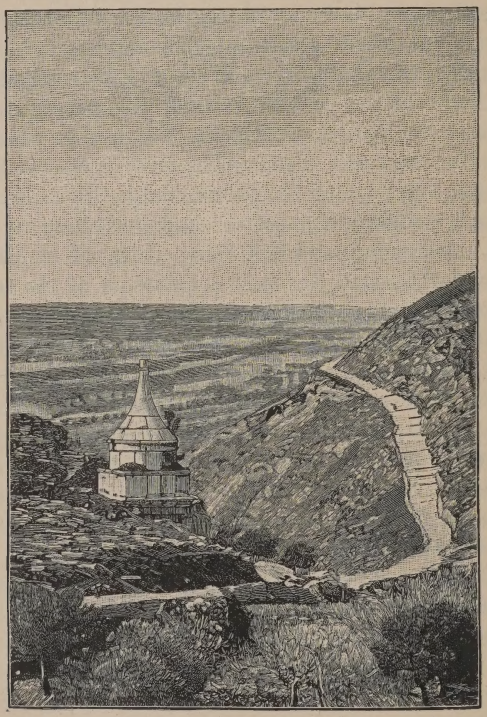
"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as is the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in My hand, O house of Israel." While he mused and spoke he must have become aware of the other followers, not those of love, who whispered together in their indignation, listening keenly to make his words an occasion of ruin and destruction to him, thrusting their heads over the shoulders of Baruch and his companions that they might hear everything, and hurry with their report of treachery to the king. Did Jeremiah take up the earthenware bottle from where the potter

had thrown it, with its twisted neck or imperfect form unfit for use, and look back to call "the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests" the old men born in better days, who most probably were his friends and the salt of Israel, to witness this final sign of doom? or had they by this time heard where he was and divined a more than usually important message, and come out after him drawing with them the usual accompaniment of the idle crowd, till the valley was filled with the representatives of the nation, those who were of much importance and those who were of none, all eager to hear what he would say? Jeremiah was well aware that half of his listeners at least were hostile to him: but that made no difference to the message which he pointed so emphatically. The spot near which he stood was already accursed ground, for the potters' huts were at but a small distance from Tophet, the lowest point of the valley, the place in which Israel had most horribly and cruelly sinned, the hell on earth where Moloch's bloody altars had stood, and the children had been passed through the fire. Here where "the blood of innocents" had been poured forth filling the place with horror, should destruction and murder come. "This place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter." Dreadful enough was the former name, a synonym for the darkest hell, the bottomless pit: but more dreadful still would be the dark valley when filled with the dishonoured dead, the slain whom the soldiers of Babylon would leave in heaps, and whom the miserable remnant left would have no power to bury, who would be consumed by wild beasts and vultures within sight of their homes. The valley of slaughter! dark Aceldama with its shadows of tombs, a fatal slope which even now seems to repulse the sunshine, the potter's field to be bought

thereafter with the price of blood, frowned upon them where they stood to listen: and no doubt many a dread memory of scenes already witnessed there came back to every man's recollection. And then the prophet dashed the bottle from his hands upon the stones, shattering it in a hundred pieces, startling every careless ear, if careless ears were there, even in that eager assembly, to attention. "Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again." The symbol was stronger still than that of the clay which the potter could still, while it was unbaked, mould into a better shape, crushing it in his hands, moistening and softening it to be capable of another form. But the spoiled thing out of the furnace was capable of no amendment: to dash it to pieces against the stones was all that could be done, it was good neither for ornament nor use.

After the fervour and passion of this dreadful message, weary with the long course from the city, the lingering about those huts, the awe and terror of the vision which rose before his eyes as he proclaimed it, the effort of utterance: Jeremiah would return slowly to the gate and mount the green ascent, or the long flights of steps towards the Temple, in which, no doubt, was the chamber, among the dwellings of the priests, where he lived. But the crowd had melted before him, and many a light-footed messenger had already reached the courts above to carry news of this last offence of so many, this crowning and unequivocal insult to the kingdom and the hierarchy, and all that was powerful in Judah, to the authorities there. So bold an image of destruction had never been ventured upon before. It was a thing to strike the imagination of the least instructed, who might gape at the prophet's words and form to themselves some distorted idea of his meaning as is the habit of the igno-

rant, but who could not mistake the simplicity and force of that sign. The high priest, perhaps, was absent, perhaps unwilling to interfere with the son of his prede-



THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT: ASCENT BY MORIAH.

cessor, a kinsman and member of the same privileged class as himself: but the second in rank, the deputy high priest, Pashur, the son of Immer, was too deeply horrified and affronted to stand on any such formula. He came out, no doubt, to see the train that followed Jeremiah

from the valley, in hot indignation, but made no movement until the prophet paused again "in the court of the Lord's house" and began to repeat his prophecy. "Behold, I will bring on this city all the evil that I have pronounced against it." Then the priest could contain himself no longer. He gave the order to seize and punish the prophet of woe. "Then Pashur smote Jeremiah." This would apparently indicate that, transported by a passion of resentment to hear himself and all the ruling party thus defied, he inflicted not only the shame of the stocks but the punishment of the lowest offender, the forty stripes save one, upon his fellow-priest, his kinsman whose natural rank was among the highest in Judah. If as appears it was the nephew or brother of Jeremiah who was the high priest at the time, the fury of his deputy is the more extraordinary, though, perhaps, not altogether without justification: since when this strange scene occurred the force of Nebuchadnezzar was approaching, and it might well have been supposed an offence against every instinct of patriotism thus to dishearten the possible defenders of the city. It might be, indeed, that Pashur's rage was wholly politic, and that it was a strong measure to discredit Jeremiah with the common people who had been so deeply impressed by the parable of the potter's vessel that was intended, rather than any vengeance upon himself.

This, however, was the end of the first portion of Jeremiah's career. Was it while he sat or stood, fixed in that pillory of disgrace through the falling of the day and the long hours of the night, exposed to every scoff and scorn that vulgar malice could put upon him, he who had been born to respect and honour—with his face turned towards that peaceful little Anathoth where his youth had been spent, but in which now his countrymen and friends of boyhood, the village folk amid whom he

ought to have had a shelter from persecution, had turned against him and conspired to kill him—that his musings took the form of the bitterest self-pity and almost complaint against his God? "O Lord, Thou hast deceived me!" What words more bitter and terrible could come from mortal lips. So said Elijah when driven into the wilderness, standing at the opening of the cave which, in all the country he had served and loved, was his sole refuge. "It is enough; O Lord, now let me die, for I am not better than my fathers." "Cursed be the day wherein I was born," cries the later prophet. The ribald crowd has been about him, smiting his cheek, pulling his beard, spitting upon him, pouring out jibe and insult. And when they disperse to their rest every man to his house, and the prophet is left alone in the chill and darkness with every limb aching and every hope giving way, his courage, too, deserts him and he feels that he can bear no more. Many a man can endure suffering whose heart sinks at the touch of shame: and here was both. Jeremiah was a man whose mind was full of the poetry of Israel, the literature of his country; and, no doubt, the story of Job, the saddest book upon record except his own, came now to his recollection. He went over his whole career in the silence of those dreadful night watches, his call to the prophetic office, his first disappointment and deception in finding that the message he had to proclaim was met with derision and mockery, his attempt to keep silence, the fire in his bones, till he became "weary with forbearing, and could not stay," the rising up of angry listeners to report him as a speaker of evil. "All my familiars watched for my halting." While all these miserable thoughts circle in his mind, and every earthly hope melts from him, there suddenly sweeps through him a breath of strong consolation driving them all before it. "The Lord is with me

as a mighty terrible one": a thought which in the midst of his trouble, in the darkness of his abandonment all shamed and suffering as he is, makes him break forth into a sudden burst of joy, "Sing ye to the Lord, praise ye the Lord: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hands of evildoers." Did the watchman on the walls hear this sudden cry in the night and come down to listen—overawed by the victim's triumph, and, perhaps, not knowing that when that momentary shout had died on the night air, the heart of the lonely man sank again in his bosom, and in a despondency as sudden and instinctive he cursed the day that he was born?

For a long time after this Jeremiah appeared no more in Jerusalem. He had filled the office of a prophet or rather of the prophet of the time for more than twenty years. That there were other prophesyings going on during this period is evident and referred to again and again, some of them, as those of Urijah of whom there is a confused acount, whom Jehoiakim pursued to Egypt and killed, following in the footsteps of Jeremiah; some like Hananiah taking the other side, promising victory and deliverance, false prophets whom he never hesitated to denounce and upbraid. Nay, Pashur himself who inflicted upon him so much pain and contumely, would seem to have been one of those fair-weather prophets, flattering king and people with false hopes. But of all these busy and conflicting voices we know none, except that of the great prophet of doom, the one poet-seer whose utterances bring the very atmosphere of fate, the confusion and trouble of the city in peril, the conflicting counsels, the hesitation and tumult, before our eyes.

Where it was that Jeremiah found refuge after that terrible night of dismay we have no indication. "I am shut up: I cannot go into the house of the Lord," he says, but no more. He who had been safe for so many

years under the protection of King Josiah, and the prestige of his own father's name, it is very possible that the ignominy of his present position was more than he could bear. His ministry had in some measure changed even before this turning-point. From the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim he had been a man discountenanced, to whom other methods than those of argument and exhortation were necessary. He had been forced to adopt the symbolical teaching which had been common to Isaiah and the other prophets, the language of signs and pictures, and that of a most forcible kind. He had put a yoke upon his own neck and bonds on his limbs as a symbol of the subjection which was to come not only upon Judah but upon all the surrounding nations. He had brought up the Rechabites out of their dwelling and offered them wine in order to show by the contrast of their faithfulness to their ancestor's command how unreasonable was the disobedience of the Hebrews. And last and most telling of all, he had broken the potter's vessel, the bottle of brittle earthenware, to show how the kingdom of David was to be dashed to pieces on the very stones which formed its foundations. Was not this of itself an evidence that his audience had ceased to be the instructed and superior classes, and had come to consist more and more of the mere multitude who would not have understood his addresses, but who comprehended as by a flash of lightning the primitive language of sign and parable? And was not he himself at the gate, standing fixed in that disgraceful pillory, a sign above all others, a testimony that Israel would not hear, nor God's people consider, that the time of teaching, of warning, of reformation was past, and that nothing now but the fulfilment of all his terrible prophecies remained.

Yet one effort more, however, had to be made. Probably Jehoiakim himself, at least since he became king,

had heard but little of what Jeremiah had to say. It is true that the prophet had been commanded on more than one occasion to stand at the gate by which the king went out and came in, probably where he still sat to administer justice on set occasions according to primitive custom. But of all persons in the world a king can escape most easily from what he does not wish to hear, and either the prophet might be hustled away or the king break up the session to escape from that persecuting voice. Thus there was yet one individual in Jerusalem to whom it might be supposed that the warning and appeal to repentance, and the promise that was invariably attached to a change of life, had not fully come. Jeremiah was therefore instructed to write all his previous prophecies in a roll, so as to keep a definite record of God's purpose before the eyes of the nation: "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do unto them: that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." "The roll of the book" in which Jeremiah was to write his prophecies is one of the most primitive forms of literature: yet it exists to this day, not only in ancient manuscripts, such as that preserved at Shechem, but in the books used in the Jewish synagogue, where, I believe, the roll, wound upon two strong pieces of wood and enclosed in a case, is still the form under which the law and the prophets are read in the public service. The parchment was accordingly procured and prepared, and Jeremiah's attendant and companion Baruch began to write "from the mouth of Jeremiah" we are told, though probably with the aid of various scattered transcriptions of what had from the beginning of his career fallen from his lips. In what place of refuge this work was carried on, whether in the cave outside the northern wall of the city, which is still called the Grotto of Jeremiah, or in

some humble house at Anathoth or other shelter, we are not told; but at all events, while it was going on the prophet and his devoted secretary must have had an interval of seclusion and peace.

In the meantime, while these last most significant and momentous utterances were being collected events had happened outside, of the highest importance, and which gave to them all a double force of meaning. Nebuchadnezzar, who had just won the battle of Lachmish against the Egyptians, and once more cowed and broken that great power, bringing dismay to all in Jerusalem who had trusted to an alliance with Egypt for their preservation—had passed by Jerusalem on his way back to the north, exacting yet more tribute, a tribute not only of money but of men, and carrying away with him a certain number of captives: among whom were some youths and children of royal race, especially Daniel and his companions. This visit, though it would not seem to have implied any fighting or to have been of a cruel character—for the great conqueror meant no harm to his young captives, whom he placed about his own person and advanced to much promotion and honour—must have been a symbolical lesson even stronger than those administered by Jeremiah, and have given to his utterances the very sharpest point, the most vivid justification. It was probably after this visit that the prophet put a yoke upon his own neck to show the complete subjugation which was ordained for his people, and broke the bottle in the valley of Hinnom. The city was yet all agitated by the passage of the conquering army, the country torn asunder by different plans for resisting him if he should come again, and by speculations whether Egypt, crushed by such a blow, was still fit to be trusted to, or if she were not more than ever the bruised reed incapable of affording any support, which the mocking Assyrian had long ago declared her to be.

But no party, we may well believe, advocated as Jeremiah did, the policy of throwing aside all unavailing resistance, and rendering full submission to the invader. It was not a patriotic policy at the first glance. But we may believe, at the same time, from the evidence, at once in these same prophetic addresses, and in the national records which point to a state of utter disorganisation and incompetence, that Jerusalem was quite unfit to offer any serious resistance, and that any feeble and hopeless, if still fierce and desperate, stand she could make would result only in deeper downfall and overthrow.

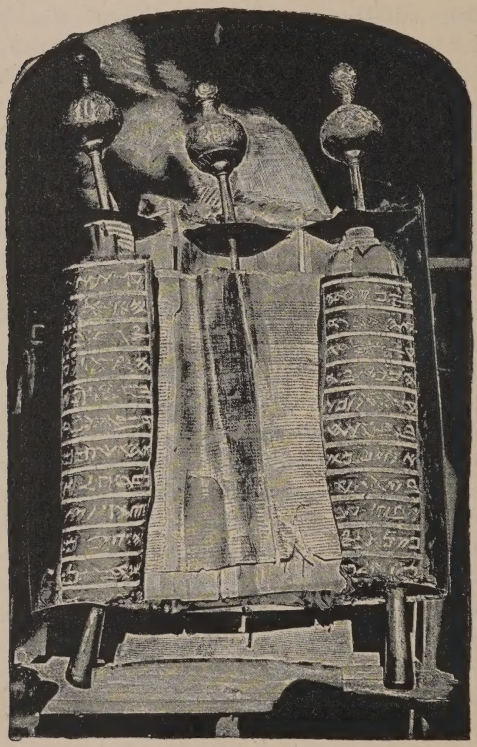
It was in these circumstances then that the roll was prepared and written. Jeremiah was "shut up" in hiding, perhaps, or at least in close retirement, avoiding publicity. When the writing was complete Baruch took the roll and went up to the Temple. There had been a fast proclaimed, a day of humiliation, most probably on the occasion of that visit of Nebuchadnezzar, as soon as the conqueror's back was turned. And what so fit for such an occasion as the repetition of those impassioned addresses in which deliverance and safety were still promised as the recompense of a real and universal repentance. Baruch went first to that new gate in which so many of the incidents of this mournful drama took place, going into "the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court," a room which must have opened upon the gateway, either on a level with the stream of people coming and going, or, perhaps, over the arch of the portal. It was at "the entry of the new gate" which all the worshippers went through: and no doubt the sight of the Babylonian armies which had passed there, only as it were the other day, and of Nebuchadnezzar himself, the great conqueror, had deeply impressed the mind of the crowd—as well as that sight, more moving than any threat however terrible, of the

train of captives following his steps, and among them the royal boys, descendants of good King Hezekiah to whom this very misfortune had been prophesied. It would seem that Gemariah to whom the room belonged was absent in attendance on the king; and when his son Michaiah heard the nature of the prophecies which Baruch was reading he hurried down to the king's house to inform his father and the other great men of the court what was being done. It is extraordinary that these prophecies which had been spoken by the prophet himself again and again at this same gate, and many other places all over Jerusalem, should now be treated as a new and alarming thing. One wonders if the princes of Judah had become accustomed to the sight of him and passed him lightly by as a man half mad in his inspiration, too wild and far astray from common life to call for serious attention—and if this sudden appearance of a book read aloud as if it were a sacred Thora, a book of the law, startled them as by something more weighty not to be neglected? A book is a thing imposing to the ignorant even now when there are so many: and in those days was, no doubt, looked upon with awe which no mere speech or utterance would inspire. The startled rulers sent immediately for Baruch that they might hear what it was that he read in the hearing of the people. Probably the appearance of Baruch, a well-known man of important position, as the exponent of the prophet's views, increased the effect of this new and alarming departure—as the appearance of a philosopher of known name and acquirements, as the convert and interpreter of certain developments of what is called spiritualism, produced a temporary sensation in our own day. But even this is strange enough, for Jeremiah, too, was a well-known person, not a nobody, and they must have both seen and heard him on many occasions. However

this may have been, Baruch was sent for, and when he had read his book (which probably contained but a chosen few of the prophecies of Jeremiah) to this grave assembly, their conclusion was that the king must be informed. "Tell us now, how didst thou write all these words?" they asked. Then Baruch answered them: "He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in this book." The grave men, concerned and troubled as by a serious matter heard for the first time, appear to us like a picture surrounding the young scribe with anxious looks, disturbed beyond measure by what they had heard, not knowing how the king might take it. Was it really possible that they had never heard the prophet's message before? There was evidently no hostile feeling in their minds to the authors of these utterances. "Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah," they said, "and let no man know where ye be." Whatever happened they were anxious at least to save the bold men who had thus proclaimed God's approaching judgments. This troubled conclave gives us no impression of an obdurate and impenitent race like those continually visible in the passionate addresses of the prophets. They would seem to have been unmistakably impressed by what they heard, almost one would imagine agreeing, acknowledging the truth of it in their hearts, anxious that the king should hear it as a matter of public importance, and presenting the still more curious aspect of never having heard it before.

Its effect, however, upon the king was very different. When the counsellors with evident seriousness and alarm had reported to him something of the purport of this new book he sent one of his attendants to bring the roll: and here again we have a glimpse of the interior of life as it was led in Jerusalem in those days. The king was in

"his winter-house," no doubt the southern rooms fully exposed to the sunshine, looking over the fortifications of the Temple enclosure to the network of ascending



ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT AT SHECHEM.

and descending paths, the intricate lines of height and hollow that stretch out towards Bethlehem. In the middle of the room stood the large open vessel which we call a brazier, filled either with smouldering charcoal, or

with the purer fire of wood embers glowing red. The king sat near this centre of warmth while the courtier stood up and read. There would be some such stand as those now used for the Koran to support the heavy roll. But Jehudi had not read above "three or four leaves" when the king snatched it from him, and drawing a knife from his girdle, divided the parchment with a stroke and threw the pieces upon the fire, "until all the roll was consumed." Three of the princes, Elnathan (who would seem to have been the king's father-in-law) and Delaiah and Gemariah attempted by their entreaties to restrain him, but without effect: the other courtiers would seem to have been released from their terrors by the king's audacity and indifference for "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments," when this sacrilegious act was done, and the last warning thus rejected with contumely. An order to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah followed, but the counsellors, as has been said, had happily foreseen the possibility of this, and recommended them to seek some secure refuge. "The Lord hid them" we are told, so that Jehoiakim's rage was of no effect. It called forth a denunciation of a dishonoured death to himself without burial, the most dreadful doom that could be threatened; but except that in none of the records of his death is there any mention, as is usual, where he is laid, or any description of his funeral, we have no details as to the fulfilment of this prediction.

Jeremiah and his attendant, however, disappeared from that ever-darkening scene. Did they travel forth, two sad pilgrims, to visit those of the first captivity in Babylon? The curious story of the girdle which Jeremiah was bidden to hide in a rock by Euphrates looks like this. But at all events they disappeared and no man knew or could tell where they had gone. In their seclusion, wherever it was, the work which Jehoiakim

had destroyed was done over again. It was a serious matter in those days to destroy a book of which only one copy existed: but even then it was a futile effort. The prophet repeated in the enforced leisure of his banishment all that he had before dictated to his secretary, "and there were added besides many like words." Then, as now, it was the most vain attempt that could be made to crush the literature by which, and more then even than now, a nation lives. For what should we have known of Jerusalem any more than we know of Edom, or Ammon, or Moab, but for Jeremiah and his friend? A painfully deciphered stone, the triumphant record of one man's doings, calls forth the wonder and curiosity of the whole world, while the living record of how men looked and talked and acted in all the recogniseableness of their humanity, is our legacy from the Hebrews: over which naturally, it being so infinitely more important, we make no such commotion, receiving it calmly: or suggesting that it is, perhaps, all an invention, and that no such angry king, no such anxious counsellors ever were.

The chronology of the after-part of Jeremiah's life is confused and bewildering, and the reader has to follow from page to page in doubt and difficulty, now finding himself in the time of Jehoiakim, now with a leap in the midst of the last reign of all, that of the troubled and kind, but not powerful, Zedekiah—now back again once more among the princes who were favourable, under the young king who was not so. The historical record of the period is very brief and not very clear. Whether Jehoiakim died in some popular tumult in the despair of the people at the approach of the Babylonian hordes, or was taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar in some sally, and perished so outside the walls in neglect and despair, it is impossible to tell. Nothing is said of

the actual manner of his death. He was "bound in fetters to be carried to Babylon" we are told in the book of Chronicles. But he never was taken there and disappears from history with an abruptness that implies some sudden calamity. And either in the middle of the siege or at some moment of relief when Nebuchadnezzar was perhaps occupied with another town, without, however, giving up his blockade of Jerusalem, Jehoiakim's young son Jeconiah or Jehoiachin was placed on the unstable throne, in his early youth—at eighteen, as is said in one record, at eight in the other, but the former would seem to be the most likely age—and reigned, if reign it could be called, with a powerful enemy without the gates, and a disheartened and starving population within, for three weary and troubled months, a lifetime, no doubt, of anxiety and trouble. At the end of this time the boy or his mother or his counsellors took the wise step, recommended by the prophet, of going out to Nebuchadnezzar and giving up the futile resistance which could lead to nothing but further misery. This submission would seem to have terminated the siege for the time at least. And young Jehoiachin accompanied by the best of his kingdom, ten thousand captives, princes and mighty men of valour, and the most skilful of the craftsmen—the smiths being especially mentioned, so as to cripple in the most effectual way any further resistance on the part of the remnant left in the city—was carried away to Babylon, where long after the boy-king, who had done what little was possible to shorten the agony of his people, had a peaceful end in honour and comparative well-being.

The city was left in miserable plight when all its best and strongest men were thus drafted away:—the famished crowds that remained were perhaps too eager for the chance of food and some relief from their sufferings, to

feel as they otherwise would have done the desolation of so many houses, in which some hapless old man or distracted mother only was left where the pride of the race had been: and that the sound of the anvil was silenced, and all the implements of skill thrown aside. Thus Jerusalem was left, deprived of all that was important or serviceable in her population. No doubt Nebuchadnezzar had an eye to the advantage of his own dominions in carrying off the ablest of the craftsmen, as well as to the diminishing of Hebrew capacity and power. Before he withdrew his vast army from the surrounding country the conqueror set up a vassal king over the remnant that was left, one of the remaining sons of the great Josiah, Zedekiah, the last actual king of Jerusalem. He was young also, not much older than his dethroned nephew, twenty-one only—though, of course, that age means greater maturity in an Eastern climate than in ours. The historians of Kings and Chronicles, in whose brief records there would seem a hurry as of heart-sickness and unwillingness to recall the circumstances of that darkest spot in their national history, give but a rapid summary of his reign, describing him as having done what was evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that Jehoiakim had done. But the story which is mingled with Jeremiah's prophecies, gives a fuller contemporary portrait, and one in which the part of Zedekiah has a subdued and saddened interest. He was young, probably in the distraction of the times with little training and adaptation for his difficult task, a younger son taken from among the crowd to be advanced to this painful eminence: and his princes who remained must have been either like himself, unconsidered scions of the great houses of Jerusalem, or mere officials not important enough in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar to be carried away. Of all the names of the high officers of

the court who stood round Jehoiakim, with troubled faces, when Jeremiah's roll was brought before him, there is none left but Gemariah: though the sons of two or three of these men are mentioned as might be expected. The high priest, the scribes, almost all the officials are changed. The Pashur who comes to Jeremiah from the king is another Pashur from him who set the prophet in the stocks. And it may easily be imagined if the serious men, bred under King Josiah and with all the great traditions of his reign, were unable to hold head against the invader, how much less able these inexperienced rulers must have been. Jeremiah's unflattering parable of the two baskets of figs, the one very good the other "very naughty, which could not be eaten, they were so bad," as symbols of the portion of Judah which had been carried away and that which remained, sets forth in the most uncompromising manner the change that had taken place, and was not likely, it need not be said, to endear him to the new men who had the power in their hands.

Notwithstanding, the young king, when he found that the prophet had come back to the city in the confusion of that evil time, showed no trace of having inherited his brother's rage against him. On the contrary he at once acknowledged his mission and importance. Though he might have as little inclination as his predecessor to listen to Jeremiah's message, he had a reverence, perhaps born of fear, for himself. And the new rulers of Jerusalem, humbled as they were, had not abandoned the hope of doing something yet to help themselves. Pharaoh's army had again appeared out of Egypt, and its appearance in the distance had been the cause of the departure of the Babylonians. This was enough to give a spring of renewed hope to the city even in the midst of its abasement. And Zedekiah sent a deputation from

his palace to the prophet to ask his prayers and his advice. "Pray now unto the Lord our God for us." Was it superstition rather than devotion that inspired this embassy, as Balak had sent to Balaam to curse the Israelites? Did those unfortunate rulers of the doomed and impoverished place hope that if Jeremiah could but be got to change his mind all would go well? Was it rather as a fetish than as an exponent of God's will that they sought him? If so they were most quickly undeceived. The prophet after his wanderings, after the horrors of the siege and the captivity, the fulfilment of so many of his predictions, was not likely to be persuaded into other views by any embassy. His message even was scarcely tempered by the offer of a place of repentance. "Deceive not yourselves," he says, "saying the Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart." It must have been with anger and disappointment that the baffled envoys withdrew.

And certainly Jeremiah's behaviour was not conciliatory. He would seem to have gone about, with the girdle round him which had been "marred" in the rocks by the Euphrates, and with that yoke on his neck which he had made as a symbol of the yoke of Babylon, and which was the occasion of a curious scene in the Temple when a certain Hananiah of Gibeon, one of the sons or school of the prophets, seized and broke the yoke with a false prediction that the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar would thus be broken in two years. The parable of the two baskets of figs has been already referred to. And when the messengers of Zedekiah were sent to Babylon with the tribute money Jeremiah charged them (one being his friend Gemariah) with a letter to the captives in which he exhorted them to entertain no hopes of speedy deliverance, but on the contrary to settle themselves in their captivity, making the best of it, conforming as far as

they could to the customs of their captors. "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." He adds, "for after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." Seventy years! too long a period to give hope to any living man to see that return. How much more pleasant must it have been to believe the voice of the flattering prophet who promised deliverance in two! It would not be in nature to expect that the heart of the people, always longing to believe what it wished, should not have preferred Hananiah to Jeremiah. And how the hearts of those who sat down by the waters of Babylon and wept as they remembered Zion must have sunk within them when the letter was read! and yet it was the best advice that could be given to them, and was evidently taken by many, since such glimpses as we have of the captive Jews in Babylon describe a number among them as rich and prosperous men.

It is not to be wondered at, however, that the authorities in Jerusalem should look out eagerly for any opportunity of sequestrating from the sight and hearing of their disturbed and despondent people such an image and messenger of trouble as this uncompromising prophet. Every appearance of him in the streets or at the gates of the Temple with his mildewed girdle and his yoke, must have been as a picture to the populace of mournful meaning, though he might never open his mouth; and at length the opportunity came. The next scene occurs at the moment when Nebuchadnezzar, having found his puppet Zedekiah as rebellious and ready to conspire as his brother and nephew had been, had returned with his army to crush the ever insubordinate city, but momen-

tarily alarmed by the rumour of Pharaoh's army approaching, had made a feint of raising the siege. As soon as the ways were liberated and the gates open Jeremiah went out "to go into the land of Benjamin" "in the midst of the people," no doubt among the crowd which would pour forth in search of food and refreshment after long famishing in the blockaded city. But the captain of the ward saw among the crowd the figure of the prophet, going in all probability to his father's fields at Anathoth to bring in provisions for himself and his kindred. "Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans," he cried, seizing upon Jeremiah as he passed: and, no doubt, the crowd would think the accusation a very likely one considering how the prophet proclaimed the might of the Chaldeans and discouraged all resistance to them on every occasion. Jeremiah denied the accusation, but in vain: and he was hustled away through the throng to the Temple enclosure, and thence to the house of Jonathan the scribe, underneath which lay the dungeons hewn in the rock, and in such evil condition as the ancients thought fit and meet for serious offenders. Here, we are told, he remained "many days," which means in Hebrew idiom a long time, long enough we may suppose to admit of the return of the Chaldeans and to quench the noisy triumph of the Egyptian party in the city. Against this dominant faction Zedekiah, it is evident, could not maintain his own authority: but in the subsequent depression he took heart to have the prisoner brought out and conveyed secretly to his palace.

There is much that is touching and attractive in the character of Zedekiah as here exhibited. He was not a man of resolution or courage. He was not strong enough even to be sure of his own opinions or faith, but wavered according to the changes of the moment: yet he had a feeble good meaning at the bottom of all and a trust in

the prophet of his father's time, the man whom no flatteries or persuasions could corrupt. He came "secretly" to the rescued prisoner with all the soils of the dungeons upon him and asked, with what trembling we may conceive, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Unhappy king with no real confidence in his heart, forced forward and held up by those about him in the futile and hopeless struggle! In that secret chamber, with no one near to excite panic or indignation, and with this childlike, timid appeal in his ears, might not Jeremiah, might not his God, find a word of comfort for the son of David. Alas no! "Is there any word from the Lord?" "There is": replied the prophet: "for, said He, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the King of Babylon." There is something that seems inexorable, terrible, in this doom, a doom which no individual supplication could now avert, not the feeble attempt at well-doing of a powerless king.

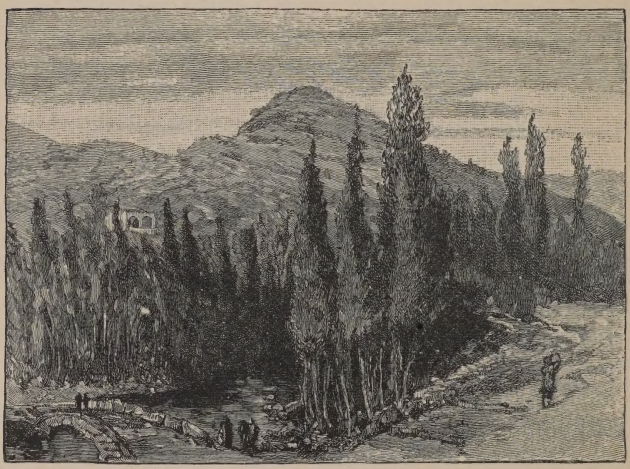
For there had just passed an event of great importance in the history of the race, a further demonstration by the disobedient rulers of how little any amendment meant which misfortune or terror might force them to. At an earlier period, whether the beginning of Zedekiah's reign or at some other of the lowest points of national despondency, when their hopes had sunk so deeply that a hurried attempt to propitiate God commended itself even to the most rebellious, it had occurred either to the king or to some one among the rulers to suggest the carrying out of a command in the law which had long fallen into disuse. This was the liberation after seven years' service of every Hebrew bondsman. It was not forbidden to have slaves: it was even permitted to buy a slave either from himself in repayment of a debt, or by purchase from another who had been his creditor, but with this powerful restraint and limitation that at

the end of the seventh year all the conditions of bondage were annulled and the slave went free. He was also by a similar law reinstated in his original patrimony when the sabbatical year came round, so that neither slavery nor confiscation of a permanent nature could exist in Israel. This law, however, had fallen into absolute disuse, and Hebrews had been retained in slavery as if they had been strangers. It was a well-chosen act with which to show a desire to return to the better ways of their fathers, and render real obedience, not a mere ceremonial service to God. But when the immediate terror of the moment was over, this just act began to represent itself, in what they would, no doubt, call its true colours to the masters and owners of these liberated slaves. What! give up so much wealth, so much additional importance as their property in these workmen and servants gave them, sacrifice their superiority, their money; and for what? For a doubtful approval from the God whom they feared by times yet had no true allegiance to: when here were the Egyptian banners defiling out of the desert, and the Babylonian encampments breaking up without any help from Jehovah, and ease and safety coming back! "But afterward they turned and caused the servants and the handmaids whom they had let go free to return, and brought them into subjection." These slaves, the men of them, had doubtless gone to the walls to help in the defence of the city in the joy of their deliverance: but what did it matter now about the defence of the city, when Egypt triumphant was on her way to deliver Jerusalem? There was still a king of Judah captive in Egypt, Jehoahaz, and no doubt a train of attendants with him; but who would think of that in the delirium of extravagant hope in any prospect of safety, which is so often seen in a country on the brink of destruction.

No sterner denunciation ever came from Jeremiah's lips than that which followed the miserable failure of this only real effort after amendment made in the doomed city. It was probably uttered in the miserable dungeon where he lay, scarcely capable of hearing, deep underground as he was, even those "snortings from Dan," when they come, that sound of a great multitude which would intimate to the whole city that the besiegers were gathering again to their camp outside the walls. "I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the world." It had no doubt been after the manumission of the slaves that Jeremiah promised to King Zedekiah though not deliverance yet a peaceful end. But now he withdrew that favourable sentence: "Zedekiah and his princes I will give into the hands of their enemies, and into the hands of them that seek their life, and into the hands of the King of Babylon's army, which are gone from you. Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and burn it, and take it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant." It was in the midst of the jubilee and rejoicing caused by the raising of the siege and the rumoured approach of the Egyptian army that this last word of doom was said.

But that transport of fancied deliverance was soon over. The Chaldeans came back and the state of the city was worse than ever when Zedekiah took the prophet out of his subterranean prison. Whether from mere superstitious terror of offending still further the incensed God whom Jeremiah served, or from a lingering hope that some good might still result from the prophet's intercession, the king gave ear to his anxious prayer not to be

sent back to his dungeon. "Cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan, the scribe, lest I die there," and imprisoned him instead "in the court of the prison," presumably a bearable confinement which kept him out of the way of danger. Zedekiah gave orders at the same time that a piece of bread should be given him daily out of the bakers' street "until all the bread in the city was



BANIAS: NEAR THE ANCIENT DAN.

spent," a significant proviso. And there Jeremiah remained for some time in comparative calm while the agony of the doomed city went on, and the enemy pushed every day nearer, and the misery and starvation increased. He never seems to have intermitted during all this time his dreadful denunciations. It was, no doubt, the kindest and best thing that could be done to convince them of the futility of the struggle and to exhort them by all means in his power to conciliate and submit to, instead

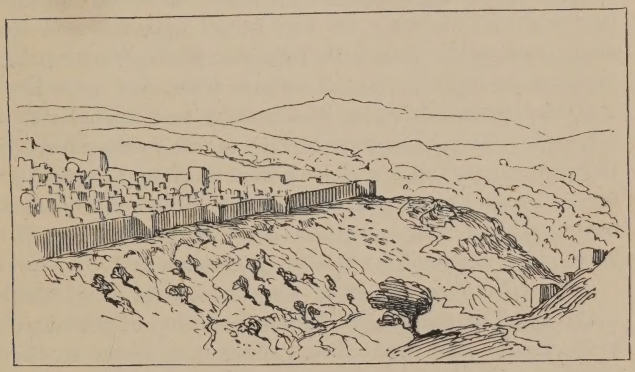
of vainly endeavouring to hold at bay, the powerful monarch at their gates; but at the same time it was, no doubt, terrible that such a voice should rise without intermission in the midst of that famished and despairing people: and it is impossible not to feel a certain sympathy for the harassed rulers at their wits' end, when they came once more to Zedekiah to beg that the prophet who was almost as great a terror as Nebuchadnezzar himself might be either put to death or so imprisoned as to be made harmless at this crisis of fate. "He weakeneth the men of war that remain in the city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them." In this respect, no doubt, they had right on their side. "Behold, he is in your hands," said the despairing Zedekiah, "for the king is not he that can do anything against you." The result was that Jeremiah was thrown into a still worse and more terrible dungeon than before, into which he was let down by cords. "And in the dungeon there was no water (presumably a better state of affairs), but mire: and Jeremiah sunk in the mire." If his prophecies were fatal to the people, they brought, at least, nothing of advantage to himself. He was cast into this dreadful hole to starve and die neglected while the tumult raged over his head. Was it he who spoke in the Psalm of being brought out of the horrible pit, and from the miry clay? Such was, at least, the miserable place in which he now lay.

From this terrible plight the prophet was saved by a stranger, an Ethiopian eunuch, most likely one of those gigantic blacks who still guard the harems of Eastern princes, a man of considerable authority and power in the household though his position was so little elevated. He was more pitiful if not more pious, than the Hebrew princes; it is possible that as a proselyte he might be the latter too. He went to the king "then sitting in

the gate of Benjamin," the gate that looked out towards the north, that of St. Stephen or of Damascus, perhaps, in modern nomenclature, sadly sitting looking out upon the great army that lay stretched as far as eye could see, superintending, perhaps, the erection of some new machine for stones or other missiles on the walls. "My lord," said the eunuch, "these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah, the prophet whom they have cast into the dungeon; he is like to die of hunger in the place where he is: for there is no bread in the city." Strengthened by the king's permission Ebed-melech hurried away and with thirty men to aid him succeeded in drawing up Jeremiah with the aid of strong ropes and "old cast clouts" (but this phraseology is far too Saxon for the Eastern rags and fragments, indescribable scraps of apparel)—put under his armholes to keep the cords from cutting into his emaciated frame—from the horrible pit and out of the miry clay.

Then once more Zedekiah took the prophet aside into some chamber in one of the doorways of the Temple "the third entry that is in the house of God." "I will ask thee a thing," said the anxious king, "hide nothing from me,"—piteous question which it was unnecessary to explain or to put into further words! "If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death?" answered Jeremiah: but when the king swore "As the Lord liveth, who made us this soul," most remarkable adjuration, the prophet once more opened his lips. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; if thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the King of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thy house: But if thou wilt not go forth to the King of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given

into the hands of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand." That this was now wise and patriotic advice there is no doubt; for resistance was hopeless, and only the rage of despair carried it on. And Zedekiah was, in fact, a revolted tributary who had accepted the kingdom under conditions which he had broken, and whose part it evidently was to make submission, since no higher rôle



JERUSALEM: NORTH-EASTERN CORNER. NEBY SAMWIL IN THE DISTANCE.

of heroism was within his power. The king heard without anger, making a feeble defence that the Jews who were among the Chaldeans would turn against him, but listening in silence to Jeremiah's further argument, feeling, we cannot doubt, its justice, though afraid, shut in as he was among a fierce oligarchy of desperate men, to take any step in obedience to it. All that he said was to beg Jeremiah not to betray to the princes what he had said, before he sorrowfully left the prophet, once more in the daylight and fresh air, in that court of the prison where life was at least endurable and where he remained until his dread prophecies were accom-

plished. "He was there when Jerusalem was taken" looking on with a breaking heart while the last horrors were inflicted, the streets filled with the slain, the holy and beautiful house he loved battered down, and fire raging among its courts. No man harmed Jeremiah in that hour of fate: the Babylonian general would have given him honour and promotion if he would have accepted them, knowing, no doubt, by report that the prophet had always been on his side. It would appear that when all was over, he was bound with the rest in chains and went along with the mournful procession of captives as far as Ramah: where some one probably told the general who he was, and he was immediately released. "If it seem good to thee to come with me unto Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee; but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me to Babylon, forbear: behold all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go."

Jeremiah chose the latter alternative; he went back with Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, of a family that had always been favourable to the prophet, and who was now appointed governor over the poor refugees of Jerusalem, who were left like the few berries on an olive-tree that has been well beaten, like the few leaves on the ends of the boughs swept by autumn breezes, like the two ears and part of a leg taken by the shepherd out of the lion's mouth according to the forcible metaphor of Amos. The land was before him! What irony was in the words! the land with all its vacant houses shattered, open to the rain and scorching sun; and Jerusalem a heap of smoking smouldering ruins. The captives marching along the weary ways in their chains, two and two, beating out footsore and heart-sick the long, long route to Babylon, were scarcely so sad as the few who remained and went back to find their

beautiful city, the joy of the whole earth, as they had proudly called her in their songs, lying bare upon her hillside, her dead unburied, the wretched relics of her populace coming out by night like owls and bats, gathering what garbage they could find to eat, afraid of their own shadows. Not any dread satisfaction in the prophecy fulfilled, not any sense of relief in the catastrophe accomplished would reconcile the hearts of these miserable Hebrews to the dreadful sight before their eyes.

The unfortunate Zedekiah, forced along by the impulse of stronger wills than his own, had been persuaded to flee at the last moment—or had been carried off by the superior force of his counsellors—by night in the opposite direction, passing the very spot where Jeremiah had watched the potter making one vessel to honour and another to dishonour, away wildly towards the plains of Jericho: but was pursued and caught and brought ignominiously to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah far off on the way to Babylon. The conquerors, enraged, no doubt, by the vain and futile resistance which had only prolonged the siege and increased its horrors, killed the sons of the unfortunate king—who, from his age must have been little more than children, and who, no doubt, were among the captives who had been brought from Jerusalem—before his eyes, ere these unhappy eyes were cruelly put out and saw no more. He was then loaded with chains and carried off to Babylon, not permitted even the evasion of death; such was the fate of a rebel and conspirator against his suzerain in those days of blood and fire.

There is a cave opposite what is now called the Damascus gate of Jerusalem, deep and black on the side of the little hill, where once Jewish criminals were executed, and which is supposed by some to be the real site of the greatest tragedy that earth ever saw—which

tradition calls the Grotto of Jeremiah, and in which it is believed the prophet took shelter, and wrote the great and heartrending poem which we call the Book of Lamentations. Nowhere could the desolation of the deserted city be more clearly seen. It was there that the assault had been made, and the shattered walls and ruined fortifications would afford clear views of the horror within, the vultures descending in dreadful clouds, the jackals stealing forth by night to seek an awful prey. The smoke of the burning would hang over the whole: and over Moriah the aching void where once Solomon's beautiful Temple had been, would wound the eyes that gazed and gazed and found no familiar outline in the charred ruins heaped upon the hill. And sound there would be none in the abandoned place, the openings of the streets all hushed, their steep lines of descent between buildings roofless, windowless, full of emptiness, pathetically visible without a passenger. And there the prophet of woe might well have looked forth under the black shelf of the rocks, and framed his mournful song —one of those wonderful Hebrew poems which forestalled in the early centuries all that later poets could say.

"How doth the city sit solitary,
That was full of people!
How is she become a widow!
She that was great among the nations,
And princess among the provinces,
How is she become tributary!
She weepeth sore in the night,
The tears are on her cheeks:
Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her:
Her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
They are become her enemies.

"The ways of Zion do mourn,
Because none come to her solemn feasts:
All her gates are desolate:
Her priests sigh,
Her virgins are afflicted,
And she is in bitterness."

The reader will remember how Dante in the sudden hush and stupefaction of the blow which seemed to darken heaven and earth to him, could find no words so meet to express his sense of that cessation of life and hope as those of his ancient fellow craftsman, the poet of desolation, exiled, imprisoned, outlawed like him, yet turning ever like him with a heartbroken tenderness to the home of his love. "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!" Jeremiah's prophecies had not possessed like those of his predecessor Isaiah the unfailing charm of a poetic genius which never flagged, and had all the resources of unconscious but supreme art at its disposition. The terrible monotone of denunciation, just broken here and there by the melody which he caught up from those who had gone before him, the momentary vision which revealed the Sun of Righteousness even to his weeping eyes, is too continuous in its rage of sorrow for the general ear. We are tempted almost to turn to the lighter side by times, to approve any tumult or noise of discord which the doomed Hebrews could make to escape from such an unbroken cry of doom. But when all is accomplished and the poet's heart breaks out in that wail of mourning, we recognise once more the great and crowning glory of the race, the fount of poetry which flowed so full and bright, first of all the celestial streams which have watered the earth, first and most lasting "above all Greek, above all Roman fame." It takes its place among those great poems which express in their different ways the inmost passions and thoughts of humanity, the song of love, the song of the vanity of human things, the song of Job, the mysteries of God's dealings with man. The song of sorrow fills up the wonderful tale.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?
Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

"Mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water,
Because the comforter is far from me.

"The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground,
And keep silence:
They have cast dust upon their heads;
They have girded themselves with sackcloth:
The virgins of Jerusalem
Hang down their heads to the ground.

"The children and the sucklings swoon
In the streets of the city.
They say to their mothers,
Where is the corn and the wine?
They swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city.
Their soul was poured out
Into their mothers' bosom.

"Arise, cry out in the night:
In the beginning of the watches pour forth thy heart like water
Before the face of the Lord:
Lift up thy hands towards Him for the life of thy young children,
That faint for hunger
In the top of every street."

Nothing can equal the force of this picture painted in the very colours of woe, dark against the blackness of the silent awful night, the old men, the children and sucklings, the mothers who have no food or consolation to give. Pitiful women, helpless old men, still more helpless babes! and this is Zion, the glory of the Hebrews, the city of David, the city of God. "All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their heads, saying, Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" Further words but mar the perfection of a description so heartrending, so simple, and so sublime.

Yet as he sits and muses broken gleams of other things flit across the poet's mind; he recalls his past life, such a life as it has been, bowed down from youth up under the burden of this foreshadowed desolation which now has come; how he was a derision to the people: how he called

upon the name of the Lord out of the low dungeon, how he was "the music," the mountebank as it were, of the disdainful crowd: yet in the midst of all sorrowfully reminds himself of the hand that had sustained him, of how the mercies of God were new to him every morning, and the Lord the portion of his soul. All this floats like a film across his vision, the deepest darkness, broken by a fitful gleam of light; until once more his mourning eyes turn to that city of death and once more his heart rises to heaven in the cry of a pity which is almost too poignant for words. The children! it is the sight of them in their destitution which is the most dreadful of all. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth, the young children ask for bread and no man breaketh it to them: and there are still more, and more awful horrors behind. Other cities have been as Jerusalem left desolate by the destroyer, fire consuming the walls and palaces for which men have died, the wretched and helpless inhabitants left in their misery to perish slowly over the spot where their natural protectors lie among the heaps of the slain: but none have had the same celebration, none has impressed itself in the same way upon the recollection of men.

There came no peaceful end, no comfort in his old age to the prophet of woe. His protector Gedaliah, the newly-appointed governor of Jerusalem, bore his mournful office but a very short time, and was cruelly murdered at Mizpah by a certain Ishmael the son of Nethaniah who belonged to the house of David, and therefore, perhaps, felt himself the natural enemy of the governor appointed by the Babylonians. This act overthrew all the feeble beginnings of order and restoration and threw everything into renewed anarchy and misery. The murderer carried off a few relics of the people who had taken refuge in Mizpah, among whom were the king's daugh-

ters, the children spared when their brothers were killed, for the sake, perhaps, of their harmlessness and incapacity to lead any future rebellion; but was stopped in his flight to Ammon by another captain, Johanan the son of Karech, who had gathered a few soldiers round him and delivered these captives. The state of the country thus pervaded by wandering bands, suspicious and full of alarms, not daring to go back to Jerusalem, afraid to settle anywhere, is very vividly set forth by these incidents. Johanan made a halt near Bethlehem on the way to Egypt, and there consulted Jeremiah—who being specially attached to Gedaliah was probably among those who had been with that unfortunate ruler at Mizpah—with much solemnity as to what they should do. "Pray for us unto the Lord thy God"; in their cowed and broken spirits they seem incapable even of claiming the protection of Jehovah on their own account as the God of their fathers. "That the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing we may do." Jeremiah brought them back a message full of comfort bidding them to dwell in the land and they should have peace; but that in Egypt upon which their minds were bent nothing but war and the sword awaited them. The anxious chiefs, however, would not listen to this reassuring voice, and marched on with their helpless hangers-on to Egypt, dragging the prophet with them. There he found himself transferred but from one nest of idolaters to another, the exiles of Judah throwing themselves with greater fervour than ever into that worship of the queen of heaven, the framework of nature, which they had already carried on in Jerusalem. The story of the prophet's meeting and contention with, first the women who were evidently engaged in some great public ceremonial of worship, and of the men, their husbands and

guardians who defended and adopted their action, is very curious; rest or hope was not for God's messenger either in Jerusalem or among the fugitives.

In the last portion of his book his imagination warms with a stronger and bolder strain, not unlike the inspired rhapsodies of Isaiah over the seething and agitated world around him. Sick, perhaps, of contention with his own people he lets the cherished name drop from his lips, and gazes far from him at the tumults of the other nations less dear, to hide from himself the continued perversions and wicked folly of his own people that were under his eyes. He looks, over their heads, as it were, far afield to the great empire which had engulfed the kingdom of Judah, to Edom and Moab and Philistia which had rejoiced over its fall. Clouds and darkness are over them all, trouble and misery and downfall coming even for the greatest, Babylon, the great Babylon doomed to perish even more completely than Jerusalem: her conqueror approaching out of the north as she herself came in her strength. But at last—in the end of all—a brighter inspiration returns. The prophet had sung in dungeons and prisons in the old days, of that time to come when the Lord, the Branch of David should appear on the mountains of Judah, and when evil should be redressed and every captive go free, and the throne be established for evermore a throne of righteousness. So now in the days of his fading life, amid the dusky crowds of Egypt, amid the apostates of his own race, everything hopeless about him, and around flaming skies of portent and evil omens, terrible flashings of the sword of vengeance wherever he looked—there comes at last one gleam of radiance over the hills, one voice of celestial harmony in his strained and well-nigh hopeless ear.

> "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord,
> The children of Israel shall come,

They and the children of Judah together, going and weeping:
They shall go, and seek the Lord their God.
They shall ask their way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying,
Come, and let us join ourselves unto the Lord
In a perpetual covenant
That shall not be forgotten."

Thus the sun bursts once more from the clouds, and sheds a glow of light ineffable upon the conclusion of that troubled and darksome way. It is believed that he died in Egypt in a depth of national distress more dark and hopeless than that in Babylon: for the exiles in Egypt were in a voluntary captivity and to them no promise of restoration ever came.

CHAPTER III.

EZEKIEL.

THE prophet Ezekiel introduces an entirely new figure into the record which is so full of human life and feeling, as well as of the mysterious elements of revelation. He is not a man like those whom we have already seen, inspired with great moral teachings, and bent by every means upon pressing with all their might the high lessons of Divine justice, the evils of human selfishness, weakness, and indifference upon the world. This has been the first and greatest motive both of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Their visions of the future were their reward, and a crown of hope to all those faithful among the faithless, whose trust in the promises of God were met at every point by the terrible contradiction of a nation going ever and ever more hopelessly astray, and a race which abjured every condition upon which those promises had been given. But their object, pursued by perpetual remonstrance, appeal, threatening, entreaty, renewing all the old pledges of Divine law, offering ever a new certainty of continuance if Israel would only obey —was to bring that unruly people to the better way, and to re-establish God's kingdom among them. For this they sought every argument, exhausted every image, the highest resources of poetry to persuade and induce, the strongest reasonings to convince, the ever reiterated

presentation before the Hebrew audience of what must follow disobedience, the fullest picture of the forces opposed to them, which in their own strength they were incapable of meeting. The bold language of symbol when words failed, the picture-lesson adapted to the rudest mind, of Isaiah's child, of the piece of pottery in Jeremiah's hand—were all used for the same end. This was their burden, their ceaseless effort. And when God permitted these gifted souls, weighed down by the national destruction that was so clearly coming, and by the contradiction of sinners, and the hopelessness of averting that downward course, to escape into the blessed contemplation of a remote future, and the Deliverer who was to come—even then the highest rhapsody of prophetic vision was, as may be said, practical, no vague and radiant hope of a golden age, but a distinct portrayal of Him whom they looked for, a description in many points so exact that the wonder is how it could have been mistaken when the fulfilment came. And what is true of the chief among the prophets is true also of the minor members in different degrees of poetry and perception, all of whom had the same lesson to teach, the same burden of prophecy to proclaim.

But Ezekiel breaks into this brotherhood, a different being, a strange figure with neither that hold upon the solid soil of earth which his predecessors had, the common human life, through which we see them passing among the crowds and tumults of the city, and all its occupations—or that hold upon the heavenly stores of life and truth to come which made them bold to declare a new life and hope. A wilder and a stranger figure is that which rises before us on the bank of the Assyrian stream among the first captives, in those early days when the failing kingdom still kept a precarious life upon the cliffs of Jerusalem, and the tragedy of its ruin had still to be

played out. He is, if we omit, perhaps, Elijah and Elisha, those prophets whom we know only by their legends, so to speak, by their acts and the historical record, not by any preserved writings—the greatest mystic of Scripture, involved in musings incomprehensible, seeing visions of which the import escapes us, overfull of mystery and wonder for ordinary perceptions, dazzled by glories and appearances which human words fail to interpret. That he pursues throughout, though with so many strange variants, the same objects as the others, that he, too, warns and threatens, entreats and beseeches, and that to him also in other forms the glorious revelation of the future is also permitted, is true indeed. But he is throughout a thaumaturge, a seer in a meaning of the word very different from that of Isaiah, a being full of unearthly knowledge and strange visions, less of what is to come on earth, which is the preoccupation of the others —that of what exists in that unseen which is beyond human faculties, and of which human words are incapable of presenting any clear idea to men.

Along with this, however, we have in the scraps of narrative which occur between his visions and prophecies a very remarkable picture of an agitated period, full of the most terrible alternations of hope and fear, of personal misery and humiliation, and of a national agony which in all the experiences of the world has never been so fully expressed, or with so much pathos and passion.

"By the river of Babylon, there we sat down;
We wept when we remembered Zion.
We hanged our harps
Upon the willows in the midst thereof.

"For there they that carried us away captive,
And they that wasted us,
Required of us a song, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

"How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?"

We have no parallel to this in all the world of literature, or to the impassioned cry which no Greek, no Roman patriotism has ever given utterance to with such heartrending force: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning!" It was among the exiles with whom this was the prevailing sentiment that Ezekiel, a young man at that recognised moment of fitness for office and privilege and the highest work, his thirtieth year, was suddenly called by the voice of the Lord, and consecrated by visions ineffable to the service of God and of his countrymen. He had been presumably brought to Babylon with the young king Jehoiachin five years before, to rejoin many captives of the previous reign already there: and probably also to find the remnant of an older captivity still, the relics of Israel, half identified at the end of a century with the people among whom they had been thrown, yet, no doubt, preserving many points of contact and much compassionate sympathy for the detachments of the Jews arriving one band after another in the same condition of dishonour and deprivation. Israel, however, had now been long lost amid the hordes of aliens, and had no national hope or centre to make a rallying point, except so far as, in the ponderings of years, the wise among them may have felt that in the one point of Jerusalem, and in the still undestroyed throne of David, there lingered yet a forlorn hope. That the minds of the captive community—from those high-placed and princely boys who served Nebuchadnezzar in his palace, to those who sat in the shade of the willows and had as yet recovered no energy or sense of a life still remaining to be lived out—were fixed with an intensity almost beyond parallel upon their distant home, is apparent to us in almost every record. Their gaze was

strained upon Jerusalem with something of the breathless and strained attention with which spectators watch a doomed ship in the midst of a tempest: her efforts to gain some sheltering harbour, the efforts made on her behalf, the sinking and rising of the broken hulk, with one poor flag of despair fluttering in the wild winds upon a spar, which from moment to moment may disappear in the blankness of the waves that rage about it—enchaining their every thought.

Jerusalem was like such a ship, carrying one feeble ensign of national unity and hope, upon which every eye was strained as it rose and fell. The captives cared little for the troublous incidents of their own daily life. Hope that these were to endure but a little while, that some interposition would be made in their favour, some Divine deliverance come to them, and that they might at any moment hear the joyful summons to return, was what they dwelt upon. Their very aspect shows this suspense which kept all existence in solution, and made all the common uses of humanity as burdens. "I was among the captives by the river of Chebar . . . I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished (silent) among them for seven days." The words sound like a very realisation of the Psalm. Were they too languid for any exertion, sitting under the willows, thinking of nothing but their Jerusalem, the home of their hearts? The elders appear in after-glimpses, and sit before the prophet waiting in a sort of deadly patience, abstracted from common life, for the message he has to bring them. They were, perhaps, a band of Levites, trained to no handicrafts, but only the service of the Temple, who had come to this pass, their occupation taken from them as well as their object in life, and themselves considered by the Babylonians, their masters, as a mere lazy company of professional musicians, good for nothing since they would not

even sing. It would almost seem to have been in some such forlorn colony that Ezekiel, the priest, the son of Buzi, was called to his office. Somewhere about the same time Jeremiah in Jerusalem had written a letter to the exiles—brought by the embassy sent from King Zedekiah with tribute or renewal of homage to the King of Babylon: in which he adjured them to disregard the false promises of deliverance made to them by unauthorised prophets, and to build houses and plant gardens and surround themselves with families: in short to enter upon all the routine of settled life in the country where their lot was now cast, and from which in the lifetime of the present generation there was likely to be no deliverance. Perhaps, at the period of Ezekiel's call, this exhortation had not yet reached Babylon in the long delays of the terrible road four months' journey across the desert. Perhaps, it never did reach the humble colony on the banks of the Chebar, apart from the greater current of life.

Their extreme absorption of thought and feeling in the fate of Jerusalem, is vividly apparent in the sort of object lesson which the prophet is told to give—whether in some part for the instruction of the people, whether to give him in his own person so vivid a sense of the inevitable calamity that every utterance would be thereby strengthened, it is impossible to say. He was "to portray the city, even Jerusalem" upon a tile, with all the details of the siege, the military mounds raised outside the walls (on the north side), the high tower which enabled the besiegers to discharge their missiles with effect, the battering rams, and all other instruments of war. No doubt the captives would gather round to watch while he drew on the soft unbaked clay, upon which the builders of Babylon scratched all manner of names and symbols, the outline of the city with all its towers, and the hosts en-

camped against it. What a thing would that be to find in some Babylonian wreck or mass of ruins, the rude drawing on the brick or tile, the indications of gateway and rampart which every breathless watcher over his shoulder would recognise, as he formed them with unskilful hand! There on the tower of the northern gate would be King Uzziah's engines invented by cunning men "to shoot arrows and great stones withal," and there, opposite, the last refinement of war, Nebuchadnezzar's offensive works, confronting the other to still the defensive battery. Would the prophet, careless of personal comfort as are all the religious devotees of the East, prepare his polluted food before them, and lie down upon his side for days and nights to show how the sins of Jerusalem weighed upon his heart, and how long and tedious would the time be before deliverance? Who can tell? Those symbols and wild lessons of dramatic representation are the alphabet of the primitive races. For the same end he shaved off his beard and hair, to show how, as that hair was consumed and scattered on the winds, so should be the fated city from which no deliverance could come. And amid all the stern significance of those lessons what sights of wonder came to him between—the incomprehensible glory which human description can only confuse, the dazzling of the great lights which were not for mortal eyes!

To impress still more upon his mournful audience that burden of his soul, the doom of Jerusalem, the beloved home from which the captives could not detach their hopes, which all that was best in them still clung to, with a despairing conviction that at the last God must stand forth miraculously to deliver the city which He had chosen, and which was identified with His worship and name—there was given to the prophet a vision, showing the moral condition of that once holy city. A little more than a year after his first call Ezekiel sat in

his house, "and the elders of Judah sat before me," waiting in melancholy silence for the expected message; when suddenly the prophet was rapt into that state in which the faculty of vision came to him—fell, as we should say, into a sort of trance—in which his spirit was suddenly transported to Jerusalem, "to the door of the inner gate that looketh towards the north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy," no doubt some image of Baal, or other idol such as many successive kings had not scrupled to bring into the house of the Lord. Ezekiel had been familiar with those courts and all they contained in his youth when, as a priest's son, he had been brought up in the precincts of the Temple. "The glory of the Lord was there"—that dazzling radiance of holiness and light which Ezekiel with faltering lips had endeavoured to describe to the astonished people: but it remained outside the walls: and with that glory in his eyes the prophet looked at the rigid features of the idol in its immovable helplessness with righteous contempt. But such a vacant monument of idolatry was little in comparison with what remained. In one of the many buildings which surrounded the Temple, and which were used as public offices, treasuries, and arsenals, and also for the dwellings of the priests as they served in their courses, he looked in and saw "the idols of the house of Israel" painted upon the wall: "every form of creeping things and abominable beasts," the golden calves, no doubt, the sacred cow of Egypt, the monkeys and snakes which have in their turn represented the framework of nature and its law to the debased imagination—the Ascidian, perhaps, of our own disguised idolatry and mocking worship. Seventy men of the elders of Israel—among them one whom he recognised, Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, the degenerate son of a good father—stood offering incense to these beasts and

crawling things. Yet was not this all. Outside in the gate the women, who seem in the distorted state of the race to have been, not as usual the most faithful to the worship of God, but foremost in every infidelity, sat weeping for Thamuz: and passing by them, in the very inner court at the entrance to the Temple itself—between the gate and the altar which stood close to the gate—the prophet saw five-and-twenty men, with their backs turned to the Temple and their faces towards the east, worshipping the sun, which shone over Olivet across the deep valley upon all the glistening pinnacles of the house of God. This was, we cannot but think, a more refined and elevating worship than that of the reptile and the brute: but it was equally the worship of those natural forces in which no deliverance, but only a remorseless fulfilment of the course of nature, lies. The course of nature with Jerusalem was assuredly destruction under the hand of a power far stronger than she. And to that course and to those powers the city was given up. From the moral government of God and His succour and help, as well as from His ordinances and commandments which were the condition of His promises, they had turned away, turned their backs in the emphatic language of the prophet; and now to the course of nature they were irrevocably left.

When he comes back from his trance and takes up once more the usual means of prophecy, Ezekiel is not less emphatic in his unvarying tale. Jeremiah in the disturbed and struggling city, and he so far away among the longing exiles whose continual thought is Jerusalem, proclaim again and again the same solemn message. They illustrate it by every possible image, bring every symbol and picture within their reach to their aid. In the case of Ezekiel the effort, if not less discouraging and sad, could not, at all events, be so distracting, so opposite to what might seem the last heroic struggle of

patriotism, as in his brother prophet: but his view of the dreadful prospect before the doomed people is not less sombre or terrible. To the elders who come and sit round him, always hopeful, it would appear, that some happier inspiration might be given, he never changes his tone. Sometimes he turns with indignation upon themselves as men who still maintain their idolatries in their hearts, though they would seem to have been effectually startled and shaken out of them in outward manifestation—and upon the false prophets both men and women who gain a moment's popularity by flattering visions, by promises of restoration and deliverance. Sometimes he thunders against the puppet-king Zedekiah, with a curious forestallment of the theories of legitimacy: although the question (even had it ever been a dogma of the East) was doubly complicated in those days, when a captive king in Egypt and another in Babylon must have confused the minds even of those who refused to consider Jehoiachin who was set up by Pharaoh, and Zedekiah who was set up by Nebuchadnezzar, as true sovereigns of Judah. But whatever may be those side-glances of prophecy or admonition, the one actual fact of the approaching destruction of the city and with it all their present hopes, never varies. In his frequent trances and transportations in the spirit from the plains of Babylon to the heights of Moriah—whether he bursts into the wild lyric of the sword, that mystic weapon which is furbished and flashes to the sun to smite the princes of Israel, to cut down the great trees, to hew asunder the gates, "A sword, a sword is sharpened, it is drawn forth for slaughter!"—or paints with tremendous force the adulteries of the two wantons Aholah and Aholibah, Israel and Judah, and their love of strangers, the men "who were all of them like princes to look at," his object never changes. These wantons

have had their will, they have turned from their allegiance and broken every vow; and now the inevitable end has come upon them, which overtakes all wantons, according to those very laws of nature which they preferred to the law of God.

There is something very startling and wonderful in the description of those "men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles about their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads," which he describes as having charmed the imagination of the Hebrews before their revelation as conquerors and destroyers. While Ezekiel, with his rapt eyes beheld the prophetic vision, while the silent elders sat round him, and saw with dismay the great sword flash forth, and listened with downcast heads to his parable of Judah's guilt—there were rising gaily in Babylon and still surviving in the half abandoned Nineveh, great buildings, decorated with those wonderful images, which have come to light only in our own day. Those black-bearded Assyrians "all of them like princes to look at," whose glory beguiled the daughters of Jerusalem, now adorn our museums as they adorned the walls of every palace and temple in Ezekiel's day in the freshness of their crimson and gold. The artists were busy everywhere, improving, no doubt, upon the Ninevite models, adding a twisted scarf upon those black locks, a jewel to the girdle, a pattern to the tunic, which even the captives would go sighing forth to see in the desolation of their exile, a wonder to behold. How strange to bring out the decorations of those pictured walls thousands of years after, to show us in the ends of the earth what manner of men were those conquerors of the ancient world, like princes to look at, the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Babylonians—the captors of Judah, the victorious and not all unfriendly race!

In another picture the prophet shows us the King of Babylon standing "at the parting of the way, at the head of two ways," to try by divination whether the time had come to destroy Jerusalem. In his grasp were arrows, marked with the lot, which he shook in his hand according to an immemorial custom. And he also "consulted with images, he looked in the liver," trying the auguries of classic usage, which would thus seem to have been already existing from the remotest time. Then came the day, the dreadful day, when the decision was made. "Woe to the bloody city!" cries the prophet: "I the Lord have spoken. I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent: according to thy ways and according to thy doings shall He judge thee, saith the Lord God." With what terrible interest must the captives have listened, with what outcries of remonstrance and indignation, "Be it far from us!" with what trembling of heart! Their sons and their daughters, their fathers and mothers were left behind in the doomed city. If this were true what was there more in life to hope for? How were they to endure the dread suspense, the still more dreadful certainty of fate? the horror of knowing, the greater horror of not knowing, for long months of anguish before the swiftest foot could cross the great desert, the plains and mountains that lay between them and their home?

In the midst of their confusion and terror a sign of the most appalling description was given to the exiles. "Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." What was this mystic menace, this sorrow sent not for Ezekiel's sake, but to make him more and more a sign and parable, a living lesson to his people? The desire of his eyes! yet he was to make no mourning, to shed no tears, to show none of the usual signs of grief. The company

of the captives must have kept the prophet's house in sight during that dreadful day, wondering if fire would come from heaven, if some great preternatural portent would appear: the sceptics, perhaps, with an incredulous smile watching to see what new antic the madman would be at—as, after the event they would, no doubt, say it was nothing but a natural occurrence, perhaps foreseen, callously calculated upon to make an impression! The prophet's narrative is calm as despair itself. "So I spake unto the people in the morning," not knowing what the calamity was that threatened him, but knowing it must be supreme. "And at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." Not often in Eastern records is a wife spoken of in this tone, God himself recognising the first object of the man's heart. The desire of thine eyes! it was the most perfect symbol of that great desolation in which all external emblems of woe would be forgotten, so tremendous and universal would be the calamity.

Nothing can be added to this wonderful scene: the whole Jewish community were like Ezekiel as he stood in that moment of suspense. The fate of their nearest and dearest was hanging in the balance: while they drew their terrified breath the sword, the sword of which they had heard, was coming down upon kindred and friends: torture and misery, starvation, burning, every evil that the imagination could conceive: while those unhappy listeners, spectators, were helpless, unable to lift a finger. Would they follow confused and terror-stricken while Ezekiel's wife was laid in her strange grave, he, speechless man of many utterances silenced by the same stroke that widowed him, stalking tearless by the bier in his ordinary apparel? "Ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another." No cries

of, O Lord! or O my brother! no ashes on the head, no rites of sepulture—but only the silence of one universal horrible calamity too great for human signs or words.

After this tremendous sign and the predictions that accompanied it the prophet would seem to have been dumb, either metaphorically as saying no more upon this subject which occupied all thoughts, or actually. There is a long interval in his book (which by no means certainly, however, implies a direct chronological succession) during which a number of prophecies concerning other nations, comparatively dark to us who have no material by which to judge of their accuracy, are inserted: and it is not till nearly three years after, that the next incident which more nearly concerns us occurs. While he is sitting musing, perhaps writing down the message that has been given to him concerning Egypt, troubled all night with strange sensations, the premonitory symptoms of some great event and visitation, the messenger of fate accomplished suddenly appears before him. "One that had escaped out of Jerusalem came to me, saying, the city is smitten. Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb." No doubt many public posts must have arrived in the meantime, and the news of the great victory must have been known in Babylon: but the captives by the Chebar were far out of the capital, and most likely nothing but a vague murmur had reached them, no detailed news, none of those overwhelming particulars which would make every family aware more or less what its own individual losses were, until the fellow townsman who had escaped—perhaps from the city itself in the confusion of its overthrow, perhaps from some band of captives—made his painful way, keeping out of public

routes and places where his unaccustomed garb and faltering speech would be remarked, through the country; and after long delay and many adventures, reached the little mournful colony who had hung their harps upon the willows.

Ezekiel, silent in his desolate house, had been troubled all night with the sense of something coming: some presentiment or more clear warning, a trance, or such a climax of long-existing anxiety as makes the simplest of mankind prescient of trouble, had disturbed the prophet's rest. He had felt within him the sensations of a change, the restoration of his speech, the long suspended movement of prophetic utterance. "My mouth was opened and I was no more dumb." It requires no very vivid imagination to conceive how the fugitive would be received, how the people would gather round him, perhaps with those precautions which come naturally to the captive, lest their kinsman's tale might be interrupted or he himself endangered. He would bring not only great excitement and a profound general sorrow, but details of the slaughter and disappearance of kinsfolk and relatives which would plunge every hut and house into mourning—mourning which probably had to be disguised as Ezekiel's was, lest those heathen captors who had called for a song of Zion, should mock at their misery, or demand an account of how the news had been received. Thus the full force of the prophet's parable would be disclosed to them: the melancholy little band would not dare to make itself conspicuous by its mourning in the midst of a land resounding with sounds of triumph. It would not venture to betray the knowledge of individual calamity which it had received, at least till the fugitive, no doubt hidden among them, represented as this man's brother or that man's servant, should have found some refuge in which he could be secure. Those

who heard that day, perhaps of the extinction of their family, perhaps of the death of some gallant son on the walls of Jerusalem, or some daughter shamed and outraged in its bloody streets—would make no outcry, would repress every tear, bind their headgear upon their heads, and their shoes on their feet, with a pang still more profound in the renunciation of every sign of mourning, than we should feel in a similar self-denial. "Ye shall pine away and mourn one towards another." What description could be more pathetic or more real? The father and mother would turn towards each other when they were alone, in the silent communion of sorrow, the woman clasp her child to her broken heart, the sisters lay their heads on each other's shoulders, in grief that uttered no word: then confront the daylight with still faces and the dumbness of self-controlled despair, as Ezekiel had done in that dark day when the desire of his eyes had been taken from him.

And then it was that the prophet's mouth was opened and he burst forth.

"As I live, saith the Lord God . . . Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. According to the seeking of a shepherd that seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

"And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places.

"I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be:

"Then shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

"I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

What a strain was this to pour over the heads of that despairing and heartbroken people! They came about him languidly in the apathy of their grief, past consola-

tion, hoping for no comfort. "So thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument" had been the explanation of their attitude towards the prophet long before. Even now in their despair this was how they sought him, hoping, perhaps, for a moment's distraction, for something that would occupy their self-devouring thoughts. And this was what he proclaimed to them —no dirge, no wail of mourning, no outcry like that of Jeremiah: "Behold, and see if any sorrow is like unto my sorrow." Such a cry, no doubt, was what they expected, what would have most soothed their aching breasts. But no: the prophet had said no word of lamentation over his own symbolical calamity. He makes no response now to the demand in their sorrowful eyes: but to the captive, to the heartbroken exile, to those strayed far away in the obscure corners of a foreign country, proclaims but one promise, that of restoration, of returning, of safety and of home.

And from this moment the prophecies of Ezekiel, heretofore full of the utterances of woe, have nothing but good tidings to Israel, promises of union as when "the stick of Joseph, the stick of Ephraim" and "the stick of Judah" are made into one in his hand—(a prophecy so far fulfilled that though there was no official restoration from captivity of the kingdom of Israel, many remnants of that broken people amalgamated themselves with the captive Jews, and returned with them, keeping the name of their tribes in individual instances, notwithstanding broken genealogies and lost traditions)—and renewed pledges that the land promised to their fathers should again be theirs in all its beauty and fruitfulness, its natural bounty revived, its desolate cities built again. "The Lord shall build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate." "I will call for the corn, and

increase it, and lay no famine upon you"—"the waste cities shall be filled with flocks of men." Best of all, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will put my spirit within you, and cause ye to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Strange message to follow the crowning disaster of a race, its destruction according to all precedent and every probability! Great Nineveh had fallen utterly, great Babylon was soon to fall. And no restoration came to these vast empires and thrones. But to little Jerusalem there was proclaimed another fate; and after thousands of years, after renewed and repeated destruction more complete, and a dispersion still more hopeless, the scattered descendants of the captives of Babylon, scattered in every corner of the earth—forming a part of every nation, yet never united to any—still hold that promise, and lift up their eyes towards the little land which could not hold a tithe of them, yet which mourns for them and waits for them till the end of time.

"I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

"And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them: I the Lord have spoken it."

David's house was ending in humiliation and woe, no prince of that race ever again to occupy the fallen throne, every branch of the royal line in captivity or extinguished altogether. But Ezekiel, though his mission was more sombre, and his methods less clear than that of his brother prophets, was yet not left without his share in the wonderful message: the ideal King, the Hope of the whole earth, the God-sent, the Anointed from heaven,

stands out for a moment clear amid all the terrible visions and smoke of destruction. "I will raise up for them a plant of renown."

These proclamations of comfort and hope are, however, far less characteristic of the prophet than the strange and weird vision that follows them, in which he is transported in the spirit "to the valley which is full of bones." It would seem to have been the valley of Jehoshaphat, the deep glen between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives, where the dead of Judah lay, their bleached bones strewn over those solemn slopes appealing to God. There flows the little Kedron over its stones, and there stand the solemn old immemorial trees of Gethsemane, most sacred of all holy places. But when Ezekiel in his trance saw this once peaceful valley, the traces of the carnage were still all visible, the silent ruins of Jerusalem stood desolate under the pitying skies, the dead who had fought for her, who had been flung from her ruined ramparts, or killed as they made some desperate sally, lay all around as the heaps of the valiant dead lie round the standard which they have given their lives to keep out of the enemies' hands. The sun had beaten and the winds had blown upon those sad relics of the slain; the birds of prey had long finished their awful meal; and wild beasts ceased to rove round the city where there was no one strong enough to resist them. Dry as the dust into which they were to moulder were those remains of the bold and strong, as the mournful prophet gazed upon them through that mystic air of vision which was neither of the night nor of the day. "Son of man, can these bones live?" "O Lord God, Thou knowest," answered the powerless voice of humanity. Then came the wonderful command, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Nothing could be more sublime than the description that follows.

"I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

"And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

"Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord God;

"Come from the four winds, O breath,

"And breathe upon these slain that they may live.

"So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came unto them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

"These bones are the whole house of Israel," dry, withered, worn by sun and rain, ravaged by the vultures and the hyenas, the bones and mournful relics of a once living nation; yet—"Saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." With what a throb of strange emotion must all those troubled people have listened, remembering, how well! that valley under the now ruined walls: realising, how bitterly! the condition of the unburied dead, their brethren, their sons: and held their breath to hear of that solemn rising, which was a type of their own rise as a nation, as well as, no doubt, to many an awakened heart, of another dimly promised, little understood, yet faintly apprehended rising that was to come!

It will be seen that in all this it is never the individual but the race and nation which is referred to. The twelve tribes of Israel have their symbolical place even in the heavenly land as conceived by every Jew: yet the organisation of a nation save in symbol cannot be immortal. Therefore it is the restoration of human fact which is the prospect held out to them, and the continuance of human and historical life. Few of the individuals who stood round the prophet to listen, or sat before him, silent, awaiting his message, could ever hope to see that restora-

tion. The prophet himself did not live to see it. With him and with them as individuals, God had His own methods as He has now and always. But to Israel and Judah the only promise possible was that of renewed and continued national life.

And was it a glorious dream of ecstatic patriotism and faith, touched with the glamour of an inspiration which was all symbolical, allegorical, visionary, the ethereal atmosphere of a splendour that never was on sea or shore, that produced that Apocalypse with which the troubled life and vision of Ezekiel came to an end? The new Jerusalem, the new temple, far greater and more glorious than that of Solomon, which the angel measured as did he whom St. John in Patmos, six hundred years later, beheld fulfilling the same office, rose before the prophet's eyes, shining upon the familiar hills. To John it was a new Jerusalem descending glorious from the skies like a bride adorned for her husband. But in Ezekiel's wild, yet strangely regular and, as we might say, architecturally scientific vision, the solid walls are founded on the very soil, and built in the very fashion, only more extended and more splendid, than that of old. That there might be in the extraordinary details of this vision a certain guidance for the restoration to come, a glorified memory of what had been, a secure storing away, as in the most sacred place, of those lines of construction which were to guide the future—upon which the prophet with the cadence and music of his own and other prophecies of the after-glory in his ears, and a dazzling sense of splendour to come irradiating all before him, looked forth with the assurance of a heavenly triumph—we may well be allowed to imagine. These promises were to be fulfilled but temporarily according to the immediate sense put upon them. Far more glorious, far more Divine, was to be the tragic triumph,

the everlasting dominion over the heart of man, of the holy city, the scene of our Lord's life and death. But by the rivers of Babylon at that dread moment the human heart had had enough of tragedy. Isaiah himself could but vaguely foresee that wonderful picture which he made, "searching what and what manner of things the spirit that was in him did prophesy," strangely revealing in the midst of those mists of glory the countenance marred more than any man of which he has left so affecting a portrait. What they needed now was the assurance of restoration and blessing and joy.

Nor was that assurance vain even in fact. The return of the Jews from captivity nearly seventy years after, was such an event as is unparalleled in history. The strenuous devotion of men born in exile to that ever-longed-for, never-forgotten city, and the strange impression made on the minds of the conquerors, by what means we are left uninformed, which made that return possible, forms an occurrence unique in the world, bearing no analogy to any other ever known. Nothing could have seemed less possible, nothing ever was more true. It was wonder enough to fill the dark horizon of the captives with exultation: and it was once more the opportunity of the race to claim and merit every ancient promise of blessing; an opportunity not taken, as we know, but which to the prisoners in Babylon it would at that moment seem impossible that their progeny, taught by experience so awful, could reject.

And with this assurance the prophecies close. It was all literal to the poet and teacher whose every lesson had been pointed by sight and sound, who had scratched the ruined Jerusalem on his tragic tile, and who now drew his lines unchangeable in solid substance of stone and wood upon the mist of that future which was made all glorious by the promises of God. At such an ebb of

THE GOLDEN GATE.

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national history when all seemed over and the eclipse of their nation and city was to every mortal vision a catastrophe without hope, there must have been something in those measurements and details, the chambers for priests unborn, the great splendid courts and galleries for a worship extinguished and a people scattered to the ends of the earth—something in the mingled impossibility yet certainty, that dazzle of the contradictory which is in all human affairs but in none so much as in the history of the Jews—which uplifted the hearts of the captives as nothing else on earth could do.

I may note one local detail of Ezekiel's prolonged and realistic vision which refers to "the eastern gate of the sanctuary," occupying it may be presumed, the place of that which is now called the Golden Gate, a spot which has always powerfully affected my own imagination. It is almost opposite now to that garden of Gethsemane in which our Lord reached one of the most bitter depths of His anguish, so that had He entered the sacred precincts from His favourite place of retirement, as, no doubt, He often did, it would have been by that door. It is the gate which Moslem tradition points out as the one by which Messiah when He comes in triumph, treading down the Crescent and all its cruel supremacy, will enter, and which accordingly, with a precaution full of that strange childishness which mingles with the subtility of the East, they have built up by way of safeguard. Ezekiel was led to this eastern gate, and found that it was closed.

"Then said the Lord unto me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

"It is for the Prince; the Prince, He shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; He shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same."

It is scarcely possible to doubt that this passage is the origin of the Mohammedan tradition: and it adds a strong

additional interest to the always significant suggestion of an entrance thus hermetically closed: by which the Prince of Princes has gone in, by which it may be He came forth to His agony in the garden, and by which, in the wonders and mysteries of a future of which we know so little, He may yet return.

And here closes the first portion of the history of Jerusalem, the little city on the hillside, like so many others of the little cities which still cover the hills of Palestine. The small tough fortress that David took has grown into a beautiful and splendid metropolis under our eyes—not vast like Babylon, or Nineveh, those ancient centres of the world—but with a splendour of the heart, the cradle of music, of poetry and song; with palace and temple, not perhaps so beautiful as those of Greece that were yet to be, but pervaded by a meaning far more beautiful, the presence of a God one and supreme, the spirit of a law, unique in its tenderness as in its justice. We have seen this city rise and fall again with all the vicissitudes of human contrariety and changeableness and the caprices of a specially perverse and individual race. It has poured forth such pæans of triumph and wailings of lamentation as never were uttered from earth to heaven: and now it has fallen, fallen from its high state—destroyed with a completeness that never overtook either Babylon or Nineveh, those cities now altogether wiped out from human habitation and ken—smoking in utter ruin, all that was capable in it gone, a few beggars and skilless poor left to creep about the deserted streets, and seek a pitiful maintenance among the foundations of the burnt granaries and the fruits of gardens trampled down. And yet over this desolate place the air thrills with promises of greatness to come, and far away in Chaldea the prophet measures his mystic chambers and builds with incisive

lines that seem to cut the parchment, the walls and towers of another temple more great than Solomon's. Could it ever be that these promises should be fulfilled and that great sanctuary once more stand dazzling under the Eastern sun?

PART III.—THE RETURN AND RESTORATION.

CHAPTER I.

ZERUBBABEL—EZRA.

THE captivity lasted, as Jeremiah had prophesied, nearly seventy years, during which time the Jewish captives had not by any means continued to sit and weep by the waters of Babylon as in the first days. The generation which was carried captive died in great measure and passed away, though there is still mention of some, very old men as they must have been, who had seen the glory of the first house, yet who were still able for the toilsome journey back again from Babylon to Jerusalem. In the intervening interval the Jews, here first called by that name, as they emerge from the obscurity into which they had fallen, had found their way, in some cases, into important offices in the government and court, and in many others had grown rich and prospered in the exercise of those inalienable gifts which still, more than two thousand years later, make them prosper and grow rich wherever their wandering footsteps are stayed—a faculty which has procured them much odium everywhere, especially when attained by that habit of "taking pledges" and exacting usury which had been one of their special sins from the beginning of their career.

The apocryphal writings, which, though without any claim to be received into the sacred canon, are full of valuable details of the Jewish life and history, give us much information concerning the settlement of the little nation among the crowds of Babylon, and of many rich and prosperous families living such a peaceful life among their captors as strangers may enjoy who have no special patriotic interest in the adventures and misadventures of the country in which they have their habitation, unconcerned whether it is a great Nebuchadnezzar or a feeble Belshazzar who occupies the throne. Such strangers unaffected by the vicissitudes of local feeling or fortune may thrive and prosper whatever happens in the alien land where they have full freedom of movement and occupation. It is, indeed, the same manner of life which that wonderful race has continued to live throughout the whole civilised world.

And it was not only the least distinguished of the Jews who contented themselves with this fate. Daniel the princely boy "of the king's seed," well-favoured and well-educated and full of that charm which seems to have dwelt with the house of David even in its downfall, notwithstanding his great genius, and wonderful adventures, and the mystic visions, more strange, even than those of Ezekiel, which were vouchsafed to him, never seems to have struggled against his circumstances, or attempted any change. He stands a mystic yet most real figure full of vigour and courage in the very court and palace of the conqueror, never swerving from his faith, always respected, full of honour and of honours. During most of his life he occupied the highest positions, one of the chief men of the kingdom: but he was obedient to the doom of his people, accepting all its humiliations and never attempting to throw off that yoke which had been imposed upon himself individually in his childhood.

Mordecai or Mordocheus, the Jew, the foster-father of Esther, though not so great, was a person about the court, sitting in the king's gate, and sufficiently well known to incur the jealous hatred of the vizier Haman. But it is unnecessary to multiply examples. The calm settlement of the majority of the exiles, combined with their never-failing enthusiasm for Jerusalem and their ancient home, is as remarkable as any other feature in their history. Daniel prayed with his face towards Jerusalem bewailing the sins which had banished his race from that beloved city, as still the far-off descendants of that wonderful people, coming on pilgrimages from all the ends of the earth, wail and pray with their heads against the ancient wall, older than all revolutions, which banks up the slope of Moriah, enclosing the area where once the Temple stood, and where now they are not permitted to set foot. Strange constancy of faith, strange inability of action! In Babylon they fondly computed the hours of the day by the old divisions, speaking of "the time of the evening oblation," though neither oblation nor sacrifice existed. But yet still lived on and throve and prospered, and fulfilled great offices of trust and government in the strange land: and neither then nor at the moment when the national penance was accomplished and return was possible, attempted to go back. Almost as extraordinary as the determination of the race to restore their holy places and keep their distinct nationality, is their acceptance everywhere of the exile which has become their general fate. They are now the richest and one of the most numerous of races. Could they be moved by the Crusaders' spirit what an astonishing intervention in the Eastern question might be made by an army of Jews, countless, interminable, from all the countries under heaven, with all the capitalists of Europe at their back! How soon might little Palestine,

the beloved birthplace which would not contain one thousandth part of them, fall into their hands! And something still of the old enthusiasm, the old heroism, the desperate valour of their ancestors, must surely remain among them. What is it, stronger than ambition, more powerful than wealth, that holds them back?

The time came, however, when so far as regarded the ancient Jews in Babylon this spell was broken. The fall of the great empire which had been foretold by their prophets, the opening of the great gates, the two-leaved gates, the gates of the rivers, let in the Mede into the careless city lost in banqueting and mirth, and Cyrus strong and great took the place of Belshazzar. What movement then took place among the Jews, or how was the attention of the conqueror attracted to them? By what incident or series of incidents was a special interest aroused in the mind of Cyrus for these exiles? No historical problem could be more interesting to solve than this, but there is absolutely no information on the subject. "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus King of Persia": that is all: and we know no more. There were many subject races in his new kingdom, relics of Nebuchadnezzar's conquests, but it was not the skilful Phœnicians, masters of all the arts, nor the shipmen and merchants of the seaports, which are always so valuable to an inland empire, whom Cyrus restored. None of these, indeed, had been swept into such complete destruction as that which had overwhelmed Jerusalem.

But it is vain to seek for any authentic information as to the reasons which directed the eyes of the new emperor towards the scattered people, who had been, more than any other, rooted out and torn away from their country. They had not even any remarkable leader to attract his attention, for their great men were old and secluded from the occupations and influences of

life. Was it the aged Daniel from his retirement who came forth, with perhaps a roll of old parchment carried after him in its case, to show the monarch his own very name in the fading lines a century and a half old? "Cyrus, my shepherd," of whom God said "I guided thee though thou hast not known me." In the criticism of recent times the mere fact that Cyrus is named is evidence enough that the writer cannot have been Isaiah but another man, the contemporary of the great conqueror: but that would be an exceedingly poor argument if Daniel or some other influential Jew actually possessed the roll of Isaiah's prophecy in which these words appeared. It is, we believe, a tradition that this was the way in which the attention of Cyrus was secured, and that in so effectual a manner, that he not only permitted but sent the Jews, or at least such portion of them as were ready to shake themselves loose of all their surroundings, and give up the comforts they had gathered about them and the protection and established security of the great empire for that visionary journey full of trouble and fatigue, to the Jerusalem which very few could remember. The act of Cyrus was all the more extraordinary, that his decree was accompanied by the gift of the valuable sacred vessels, "thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten" and much more, a small treasure as well as trophy of past conquests. It might, indeed, have had a certain political effect as humiliating the already crushed Babylonians, but few kings are ready to part with bullion even on such an argument.

This decree, so wonderful and beyond all hope, must have thrown an extraordinary excitement through all the scattered colonies of the Jews. A return from captivity sounds like something joyful and triumphant. The

people had sown in tears, but would return joyful carrying their sheaves with them. Such is the aspect in which it appears to us; but that could scarcely be the view which presented itself to the devoted chiefs and priests, who conducted the expedition, a venture almost as great as that of the first expedition from Egypt to Canaan. It is difficult to form from our own experience any idea of what such an undertaking meant. No doubt the Jewish children had been brought up to call the distant Jerusalem fondly by the name of "home," to hear continual accounts of its glory, fondly exaggerated in the recollection of the fathers and mothers who had passed away with that name upon their lips. So do our Canadian or Australian grandchildren think of the Imperial little island lying far away in the dimness of the seas; but they come and go with ease and without danger to a civilisation more advanced than their own, to a perfectly secure and highly organised life—although we have little doubt with some disenchantment and sense of having fallen from the ideal to the real, when they accomplish that pilgrimage. But the Jewish captives had before them a city in ruins, a country which had fallen out of cultivation, almost into the condition of a desert, full, no doubt, of predatory nomads, and with vexatious neighbours on every side, hostile little peoples looking out for every occasion of offence. That desolate and devastated land was home to them only in name. And between them and it, lay one of those long journeys of the ancient world, journeys almost inconceivable to us, when the monotonous jog of the camel or tramp of the ass go on for long weeks, till the lines of the endless road whirl round the passenger, in feverish endings and diminishings of long perspective, and all life becomes a confused and weary movement which seems as if it never could reach any definite end.

That some forty-two thousand of the captives (as stated by Ezra: the summing of the items does not come to this, but to somewhere about thirty thousand; it is very possible, however, that the children of the many families made up the larger number) had the courage to set out, and to take upon themselves the task of building up that great Temple which had occupied Solomon in its first construction for years, and so many other kings in constant reparation and restoration—is a proof of the great vitality and earnestness of the national life among them. The very old and the very young were in the vast party which moved slowly off from Babylon, and from all the villages and cities in which they dwelt, the entire community of their countrymen, no doubt, coming forth to see them start, watching with eyes, half wistful, half ashamed, the heroic remnant which was giving up everything for home. Many must have thus looked on who had not the courage to go with them, or who were so bound with the engagements of life, the cares of wealth, or those of poverty, as to be unable to join the train. Many, no doubt, had compounded for their want of energy by buying back captives from their masters, as is afterwards stated, and by undertaking the expenses of the journey for their poorer countrymen. The prince Zerubbabel and the high priest Jeshua have left little sign of their personality upon the record: perhaps because they did not possess the gift of expression which such an incisive writer as the scribe Ezra exercised with so much effect. They are voiceless, devoting themselves as the pioneers of the nation, saying never a word, yet not less important in the story, leading the forlorn hope not only of Judah but of Israel. They had their little band of priests about them, thirty-six members of well-known families, and a number more who could not prove their lineage, a small contingent of Levites and Nethin-

DOME OF THE ROCK, SITUATED ON THE SITE OF THE ANCIENT TEMPLE.

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ims, servants of the Temple, and a larger number of musicians, "children of Asaph," besides the laymen rich and poor who formed the main body. "Two hundred singing men and women" are mentioned among the servants, in addition to these sacred singers of Asaph's race, of whom there were a hundred and twenty-eight—so that the great caravans must have had a sufficient choir of performers, for those songs with which they beguiled the way.

By the waters of Chebar where Ezekiel lived and sighed for Jerusalem, where the captives sat under the willows—and from many another colony beside, knot after knot of people would take their way, a camel conveying the baggage, perhaps another camel with the women and children, an ass for the servant, a horse for the man, riding at the head of the party. Their way lay chiefly through the vast empire all indeed under the Babylonian sway, enjoined by the royal letters to aid and afford supplies; but where perhaps, in the outlying regions, it would scarcely be yet known that Babylon had fallen, that the kingdom of the Medes and Persians had begun, and that the king was Cyrus and not Belshazzar. And among so many different satrapies and peoples there must have been endless risks of encounter with the lawless on the way, in distant regions out of the reach of authority, and among the predatory bands roving about the plains such as held the travelling caravans in terror. Arabs and Bedouins as yet were not, but there were, no doubt, relics of Ammon and Moab, who would look on with angry wonder as they approached, besides the half savage aborigines to whom they were only a succession of huge and straggling parties very open to robbing. They took four and a half months to the journey which seems a long time even with their primitive methods: but there must have been endless

delays incident to such a crowd, and difficulties in the supply of food, besides the opposition of here and there an irate commune to their passage, the enmity which the very friendship of one town would raise in another, as well as the constant risk of sickness among the family groups, those swift epidemics of the East smiting down the travellers. And when they arrived on the northern heights from which they could first see Jerusalem, that point where the mailed warriors of the Middle Ages shouted and wept in the transport of their end attained, what cries, what wailings must have burst from the expectant crowd! That heap of ruins on the two hills, calm Olivet standing like a sentinel over them, the valley of the Tyropœon cutting like the jagged stroke of an axe between the upper and the lower city, the low lines of humble roofs hid among the heaps of destruction, what a sight to meet the eyes of the exiles! Was this the Mount Zion which was the joy of the whole earth, compactly built, beautiful for situation, the city of the great King?

It would appear that after the perils and fatigue of their journey a period of rest ensued. The people "dwelt in their cities," each forlorn household returning to where its settlement was, the home of its fathers; where the young Assyrians, brought up among the luxuries of Babylon, must have learnt to put up with the homely rock-hewn chambers of Bethlehem, the huts of Anathoth, the ruined dwellings of Bethel and Michmash, there being many families from the ten tribes in the train, as well as those of Judah and Benjamin. They dispersed "every one to his city" to form some sort of economy of possible life amid those unknown surroundings with which their acquaintance was only traditionary: while Zerubbabel and Jeshua would, no doubt, push their way on to the ruins of Jerusalem which

offered them so sad a welcome, standing up roofless and desolate under the blazing Eastern skies.

How long a time was allowed for these preliminaries we are not informed, but it was in October, the seventh month of the Jewish year, that the people were called together to Jerusalem for the first act of restoration. In the meantime the elementary difficulties of the position had been overcome, so far, at least, that the charred relics of the Temple had been partially cleared away, and the sites of the holy places identified, so that it was possible to restore the altar for the daily sacrifices in its place in the porch of the ruined building: "for fear was upon them because of the people of these countries," says the record. Probably they were anxious not only to be able to resume the characteristic rites of sacrifice which the existing generation had never seen, but also to make it instantly plain to the surrounding and not friendly people that their object was a religious one, and not an endeavour to found a new kingdom or raise any standard of rebellion against the great central power at Babylon which all obeyed or professed to obey. "They set the altar upon his bases," building up the foundations out of the fallen stones, the material that lay ready to their hand, perhaps laying upon them the sheets of ancient brass torn from their place, injured and useless, which had lain in some corner of the royal chapel of Nebuchadnezzar and his sons, and had been delivered back again to the captives along with so many other more valuable things. It is a picturesque detail that the people kept the Feast of Tabernacles during this first assembly. It must have simplified matters greatly that the time of year at which they were called was that of this feast, for it is evident that the booths or little erections of green branches which are still built everywhere in Palestine, perched high upon a wall, or

supported by piles as summer dwellings, would be much more wholesome, as well as pleasant, than any kind of encampment among the ruins, extensive enough to have lodged the people in strength. We remember to have been told that these summer tabernacles were not only for coolness but to escape the scorpions which swarmed among the ruins of older and greater buildings surrounding a little modern town of Palestine. The tabernacles of Jerusalem in that blazing autumn weather, perched high over the broken walls and heaps of indiscriminate ruin, would, no doubt, have this reason too.

From that time forth the smoke of the evening and the morning sacrifice began to rise again over Moriah, never to be wholly extinguished save for a brief interval, until the great sacrifice, of which these rites were but the shadow, had been accomplished there.

It was not, however, till the second year that Zerubbabel and Jeshua found themselves in a position to begin the rebuilding of the Temple. They had not only to clear the site, during the course of which they would, no doubt, find much valuable material in those stones in which, as sings a poet of the captivity, God's people found pleasure, and in the very dust which was dear, but to provide the finer material of the interior, the cedar which Solomon had procured from Tyre, and for which the new restorers of his Temple made a bargain similar to his, exchanging the crops, which must have been abundant since they became thus at once an article of barter, for the precious wood. What a stirring once more in those dry bones! Solomon's foundations, no doubt, still stood, fast in the rock, as some portion of them do now, Cyclopean blocks, marked with the sign of their Phœnician builders: and many of the great courses of stone must have withstood the axes of the destroyer, and offered at once guidance and material for

the rebuilding; while all about the valleys of Hinnom must have been heard the shoutings and strainings of the workmen who had dragged the great logs across the plain of Sharon and by all the mountain ways towards the city. The Levites were appointed to the charge of the work, and as soon as the area was cleared and the masons, no doubt also supplied by Tyre, that home of industry, were ready to begin, a great solemnity was held once more upon Moriah. The people flocked again from their villages, the consecrated overseers were all in their places, the builders clustered about the great foundation stone. Something of the glory of old must have been about the sacred mount where "the priests in their apparel with trumpets," glowing in their purple and fine linen, the bells on the high priest's tunic tinkling as he moved, "and the Levites, the sons of Asaph with cymbals" stood all around: and once more the song of consecration, the song of David, floated forth on all the winds.

> "Praise ye the Lord.
> O give thanks unto the Lord;
> For He is good:
> For His mercy endureth for ever."

"And all the people shouted with a great shout when the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

"But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off."

What poets, what painters were those Hebrews! how the mass of ruin suddenly becomes coherent, with a great soul in it, upon the mount before our eyes, and the old men weep for all the strange things that have been and are to be, and the young rejoice in the beginning of the

work, to which they were commissioned by the great God who had distinguished their race through all the years of human history, and the great king magnanimous and powerful who was His servant though he knew Him not. The past and the future crowded upon them as they sang and shouted in their corner of little Palestine. Was it not the greatest act taking place in the whole world, though that world, like Cyrus, knew it not?

After this joyful beginning however, the work was soon brought to a pause. The people round had seen the return of the Jews with envious and evil eyes. "The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" who now interfered, are believed to have been the inhabitants of Samaria, their nearest neighbours and in a sense kinsmen, a mixed company in which a few legitimate remnants of the ancient Israelites had so mixed themselves amongst the successive waves of colonists that they were no longer to be identified as of one nation or another, the invaders with the liberality of heathenism having adopted the God of Israel into their Olympus, willing to share an occasional act of worship between Him and Baal. Their jealousy of the sudden invaders who had thus taken possession of a vacant place in which, perhaps, they now regretted not to have forestalled them, was mingled, perhaps, with some lingering shame in their own apostacy and desire to return to a religion which now seemed a passport to the favour of kings. "Let us build with you," was what they said "for we seek your God, as you do." The Jews repulsed these deceitful overtures with indignation. "Ye have nothing to do with us" they replied, "we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the King of Persia has commanded us." The result was that these uneasy neighbours delayed the building by many devices, keeping up a constant course of disturbance

which lasted for many years. They despatched letters to Cyrus, to Ahasuerus or Cambyses his son, and to his successor, called in the text Artaxerxes, continuing the process for seventeen or eighteen years until the beginning of the reign of Darius. The vexatious character of this opposition, the effect it may have had upon the supplies from Tyre, and the difficulties it would throw in the way of securing workmen in the country round, from among those aborigines, undisturbed by any political revolutions, who still supplied Jerusalem with unskilled labour—must have been very harassing to the Jews, and seriously retarded the work which for the moment every influence seems to have combined to prevent. The character of the letters to the distant court at Babylon, where these hostile neighbours hired counsellors to speak for them, may be perceived from the extracts which are given in the text, addressed to Artaxerxes: "If this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenues of the kings," an astute suggestion which made the new monarch pause. It would appear that neither from Cyrus nor his son could any decree against the Jews be obtained, notwithstanding the counsellors whom their enemies had bribed to support their cause. But the Artaxerxes of the text was a usurper, probably terrified to transgress against precedent, or to risk any portion of the revenue. "Why should the king come to hurt?" he says in his reply. He caused a search to be made in the archives laid up in his capital and discovered that Jerusalem had been an independent and very belligerent little kingdom, with which Nebuchadnezzar had much trouble before he finally reduced it to ashes. The decree of Cyrus in its favour was not in that ancient record office, nor, perhaps, would it have had much influence upon the man who

had seized his throne. Orders were accordingly sent to stop the building, which was done by force, the Jews in Jerusalem being too few and unwarlike to stand against their enemies.

Many disappointments and disenchantments, during those troubled years, must have come to the enthusiastic band which had laid with such shouts of joy and weeping the foundation of the house of the Lord. No doubt they had thought when they made the great renunciation of their comforts and possessions and secure life at Babylon, that the work to which they devoted themselves would, at least, go on to a noble completion, and the praises of God resound in their beautiful Temple to echo over all the world. Instead of this they found themselves compelled to share in a specially bitter way the common lot of humanity, deceived in their warmest hopes, and instead of miraculous help and reward, had to learn to serve God for nought, as it is indeed the highest privilege of his servants to do. The work, instead of progressing steadily from day to day, had to be carried on as they could, a little now, a little then, as the exigencies of a life lived among enemies, with constant interruptions of their supplies and materials, permitted; and then was brought to a sudden and compulsory end. The prophets upbraided them afterwards for dwelling in their ceiled houses while the house of the Lord lay waste, but it is easy to imagine how the hearts of the returned exiles must have sunk at last under so many discouragements, and how their attempt to recover some individual comfort by betaking themselves to the construction and ornamentation of their own dwellings was an expedient to keep life in them, suggested by the weariness of their hearts.

The sudden uprising of Haggai, the prophet, and his violent call upon the people to resume the work of the

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IN THE TEMPLE ENCLOSURE; THE TOMB OF ELIAS.

Temple would seem to have put an end to this disastrous pause. Whether the news had penetrated to Jerusalem, travelling slowly as news did in these days, that a new revolution had happened in Babylon, and a new monarch had been raised to the throne: or if these persecutors, satisfied with the edict pronounced against them, had dropped apart and ceased to trouble, it is evident that something happened to revive the spirit of the colonists: and the opportunity was seized to inspire the flagging patriots to a completion of the great national work. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little," cries the prophet. "Ye looked for much, and lo! it came to little," words which must have penetrated into every heart. If he attributed this fact more to their own sins and indifference than to any external agency, no doubt in every man's conscience that also was true.

But the long-disused cry of prophetic reproach and encouragement seemed to move both rulers and people like a trumpet-blast. They resumed the work, it would appear, with such an impulse of renewed energy that it attracted the attention of a more important personage than the Samaritan conspirators who had procured the decree against them. "Tatnai, governor on this side of the river," that is, from Euphrates southward, the Satrap of Syria, came in person to inquire into what they were doing. He was not a national enemy or envious person, but an impartial official representing imperial authority. His report to Darius has all the calm of power in it, with no ulterior motive. He found these men, who were too obscure and far off ever to have attracted the attention of the great Darius, building in the wilds "the house of the great God," evidently so magnificent and unusual a work that it needed explanation. "The work," he adds, "goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands." The viceroy, with his band,

had gone up the hill to inquire into this wonderful undertaking: "Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?" he asked. The meeting took place, in all probability, outside the northern gate, as was usual unless, indeed, the satrap, in his surprise, pushed on into the interior, into the midst of the very courts themselves, not yet closed to Gentile feet, where the Tyrian masons were building, and the Levite overseers measuring and planning. Zerubbabel, of the house of David, a prince of a dynasty which had outlived many empires, and Jeshua the high priest, scarcely less dignified in descent, still more so in office, with many others of the leaders of the Jews, heads of well-known families, met the Syrian prince with a demeanour which he, in high authority himself, would be able to appreciate. "We asked their names also to certify them," he says, reporting to his master their statement that their permission to rebuild the Temple of the God of heaven came from Cyrus himself, who had given them back out of his treasuries "the golden and silver vessels of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar took." "Now, therefore," says the Satrap, "if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure-house, which there is at Babylon, whether it be so." Tatnai must have been impressed by the wonderful work of these men, which was not for their own benefit but for the house of "the great God, the God of heaven and earth," not the God of the Jews, it will be remarked. Nothing so remarkable had come under his cognisance before. This people had travelled over hills and deserts, a long and weary journey to a ruined town, away from their safe establishment in Babylon; for what? For this house of God. It is clear that the governor had no desire to stop the work now proceeding so happily in the sudden new influx of earnestness and enthusiasm

roused by the exhortations of the prophets, the strong outcry of Haggai, the happy visions of Zechariah. There is a serious interest in all he writes, a desire to do justice to such singular enthusiasts, and to have a sufficient warrant for their work, with which he has no inclination to interfere.

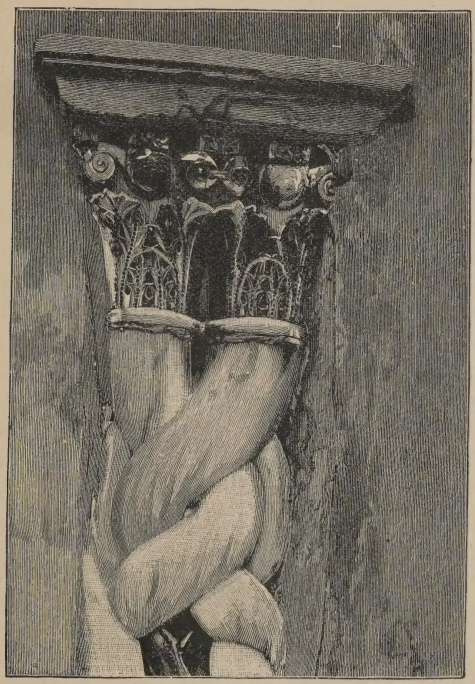
It would almost seem as if the same interest had communicated itself to the officials of the new empire: among whom, no doubt, were Jews, determined to leave no stone unturned for the benefit of their brethren and the great work, dear, even when they had not elected to take part in it, to every Hebrew heart: for they were evidently not content with their fruitless researches in the record office at Babylon, the precious decree being found at Ecbatana, "in the palace that is in the province of the Medes." Intelligence was immediately communicated to the Syrian satrap that the edict had been found, and contained even more than the Jews claimed, no less than a large contribution being promised to the expense of the building, and a subsidy of animals and provisions to be given day by day without fail, "that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and of his sons." Darius established, accordingly, all that his great predecessor had done, annulled the edict of the usurper, and charged his viceroy to see that his orders were fulfilled.

There was henceforward no further opposition to the great work. Four years more elapsed before the building was completed, but in the sixth year of Darius the new Temple was consecrated, and the Feast of the Passover kept in the restored and renovated city. Whether it was conspicuously inferior to its predecessor, as various indirect allusions would seem to imply, or whether it was really a greater edifice, is a point on which there is much divergence of opinion. The measurements as or-

dained by Cyrus are much larger than those of the Temple of Solomon, but, on the other hand, "the day of small things" mentioned by Zechariah would evidently seem to refer to the comparative insignificance of the building; and Haggai asks, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" This, however, was said while the work was still incomplete, and when the two or three venerable fathers who might survive, if any such were, had shaken their heads in the habitual usage of old age over the possibility that such raw new walls could ever equal the Temple which they saw, more glorious than ever reality was, through the mists of childish remembrance far away. Such old men as could have seen "the house in her first glory" must by that time have reached the extreme limit of mortality, nearly a hundred years. It is very possible, as so often happens in human affairs, that both of the differing views on this subject may be true—that the second Temple was larger than the old according to the stipulations of Cyrus, but that it was very far from being so richly and lavishly decorated, a thing almost certain in the circumstances of its re-erection.

The record here stops, its special object being accomplished: and the personal narrative of Ezra begins. Whether he was the author of the previous piece of history, or merely its editor, is not known nor is it of the slightest importance. It was natural that it should be written by one who witnessed that remarkable episode, and there are some touches in it such as that of the mingled sound of joy and weeping at the beginning of the work which could only have been made by an actual spectator: but the chief figures of Zerubbabel and Jeshua are so wholly without character, mere names in the history, that it can scarcely have been done by any imme-

diate follower of theirs, and may simply have been put together by Ezra from notes or oral report. The greater part of the generation which had built the Temple, and re-established the city, had passed away before he ap-

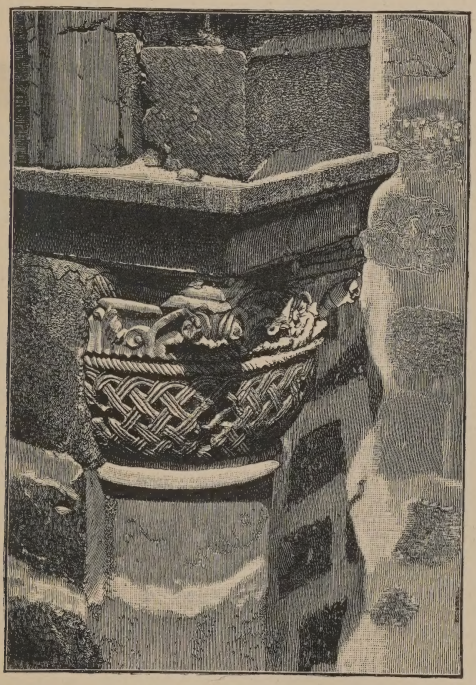


SCULPTURED CAPITAL.

pears upon the scene. Prince and high priest were both gone, the latter replaced by his grandson, the former, it would appear, not replaced at all, but succeeded by a council of nobles and rulers. Ezra was himself no Hebrew official, but a most important visitor from Baby-

lon, apparently holding office in the government there, although his special studies had been in the law of Moses. But the fact that "the king granted him all his request" shows that he had attained, as so many of the Hebrews did, great influence and favour with the reigning potentate. This is calculated to have been Artaxerxes or Xerxes Longimanus, the grandson of Darius, so that the space of rather more than half a century occurred between the completion of the Temple under the protecting edict of Darius, and the visit of Ezra. In the meantime there had occurred in Shushan, which was the residence of the great Persian monarch, that curious story of Providential guidance as well as palace intrigue which we call the book of Esther, a proof of the very general prevalence of Jewish influence in the highest centres of Babylon, which, no doubt, accounts for the almost invariable protection and favour with which Jerusalem was regarded. Ezra had, no doubt, heard rumours of the laxity of morals in the holy city, and that there were some points in which reformation was most important if the independence and unity of the nation were to be preserved. It would almost seem as if he had laid his anxieties before the king and drawn that monarch into a certain sympathy with them: so that Artaxerxes himself, the husband of Esther, and naturally as may be supposed taking an interest in her race, was led to charge the scribe with a special imperial mission, to visit and inquire into the spiritual state and position towards the law of the ancient people, "to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of God which is in thine hand." That this was a part only of Ezra's charge, and that he was also an imperial commissioner to inquire into the government of the whole state on "this side of the river," the satrapy of Syria, has been imagined, but it is a point on which there is no

information. That he had a very special mission for the Jews is, however, evident from the fact that he was permitted to take with him as many of the remaining exiles as desired to go, some two thousand in all—



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chiefly, it would appear, of the Levitical tribe which had held back on the previous occasion, priests, singers, porters, etc., of a timorous mind, whose descendants were ready to accompany the imperial emissary now that all danger was over. Ezra also took with him a large

contribution from the king and his counsellors "freely offered" this time "unto the God of Israel," a title, no doubt, proudly imposed by the Israelite official as claiming the great God of heaven to be especially his own. The mandate is urgent and detailed, ordering a subsidy up to "an hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much" which was to be supplied by the local government "beyond the river." Ezra would be a most welcome visitor to Jerusalem with all those treasures. By this time the common tenor of life must have been re-established there, although, no doubt, much was yet to be desired, and little had been done towards the "beautifying of the Temple," the purpose for which the gifts of Artaxerxes were made.

The work of Haggai and Zechariah was long over, and neither prophet nor poet existed to make known the condition of affairs: silence had fallen upon the sacred city, silence and peace and the deadening influence of settled and quiet provincial life. The Jews never seem for a moment to have relapsed into idolatry, that continual danger of their previous history. What was the reason of this extraordinary and fundamental change we are nowhere told, nor is it even commented upon by prophet or lawgiver: but it had silently taken place, a change more great than captivity or restoration. Though Ezra's mission was that of a reformer he finds no high places to destroy, no idols to cast down. That danger was over for ever, without remark. The captivity, no doubt, had been a powerful lesson, but even that seems scarcely enough to account for a revolution so complete. Was it, perhaps, the fulfilment of so many prophecies, the unexpected favour of Cyrus, in addition to the many practical lessons they had received?—or had the revela-

tion to them of another conquering people whose faith was in one great God of heaven like theirs produced a salutary effect upon their minds and helped to settle their faith? The state of affairs which Ezra went to set right was, however, calculated more than anything else could be to endanger this satisfactory change. When the Jews found themselves established and at peace, they had at once reverted to their old practice of marriages with the aborigines, Canaanites, Hittites, Jebusites, and the rest, and especially it would seem with the mixed race of Samaritans, without consideration of the dangers involved. These alliances had checked the progress of the people again and again and restored idolatrous practices in Jerusalem. It was necessary now to stop them at once and with a high hand before further evil ensued.

Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month from his departure from Babylon. The journey had been long and perilous, no doubt delayed by many pauses and roundabout ways to keep out of dangerous encounters; for the expedition was chiefly made up of men of peace, and "I was ashamed," Ezra says, "to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying 'The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him.'" The danger of such a party carrying much treasure of silver and gold, not only the offerings of the king but those of the rich Jews in Babylon, and hampered "with our little ones and all our substance," as is expressly mentioned, would not be small: but their confidence was, notwithstanding the fears of their leader, justified, and they arrived at last in safety. It is difficult to tell exactly what Ezra's commission from Artaxerxes was: "to set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of God," seems a much larger

commission than anything that could concern Jerusalem and Judah. It would seem to have given him a charge over the Samaritans also, who in a certain sense knew the laws of God and in an imperfect way retained the sacrificial system and the worship of the Jews; and also over all scattered knots of people settled on the south side of the Euphrates who might be of Jewish origin and faith. But Jerusalem was the chief point of the journey, and we hear of none of his other proceedings outside its walls.

He had scarcely arrived, however, and made his sacrifices, and paid his vows, when the princes and heads of the restored community came to him with their statement of the circumstances which had alarmed the visitor when he heard of them in distant Babylon, and which filled the magnates of Jerusalem with anxiety and perplexity. Not only the common people but the priests, the Levites, the very princes themselves were involved in this national offence. It was the beginning of a change which they felt might bring back all the evils and the offences of old; for who could secure the children from following their mothers' faith, or make true Hebrews of those who had been brought up to consider Baal as equally sacred and powerful with the great God who made heaven and earth?

The genuine grief and distress of Ezra cannot be doubted, yet his immediate actions were intended to impress and alarm, with something of that eloquence of sign and external type which was peculiar to the prophets, the imagination of Jerusalem. His meeting with the princes must have taken place either in the courts of the Temple or in one of those chambers opening upon them, which were open to the general view, like that in which Baruch had read the roll of Jeremiah's prophecies to the people. When he heard their report in the midst of the assembly, which had gathered round, of "every one

that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away," Ezra rent his garment and his mantle in the sight of all, "and plucked off the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonied." The wonder of the eager crowd pressing round to gaze at the great stranger newly arrived with such a following, bringing such offerings, a man so distinguished and important—when they beheld him thus delivering himself to a transport of sorrow, was great and overwhelming. He "sat astonied till the evening sacrifice," like a man bowed down by grief; and when that hour came, and the smoke arose through the clear air towards the serene heavens veiling themselves in the softness of the coming night, this observed of all men rose up and once more tearing his ample robes fell upon his knees in sight of all, and spread out his hands to God. His prayer was one of those which are (in a legitimate sense) addressed not only to God but to the hearers on earth, whose sins and not his own he was confessing. "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God." He had been ashamed to show any want of confidence in God's protection when he and his band faced the dangers of the way without any escort. But now that all these dangers were over, and he had arrived in that dearest spot on earth to all true Hebrews, there was no joy, no triumph on his lips. The crowd, growing more and more silent as they listened, feeling themselves arraigned before the bar, must have followed, breathless, every word. "Should we again break Thy commandments," he cried, "and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? . . . We who are but as a remnant escaped. Behold we are before Thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before Thee because of this." Conviction of the terrible danger they ran, of the probable repetition of God's judgments which this time

would not leave a remnant to escape, seems at once to have penetrated the heart of the multitude. No doubt rumours of the special object of the great envoy had already spread among them, quickening their apprehension. Only a small portion of them had really offended as yet, but they were all so closely related, and the sense of their unity as a nation was so strong, that the sin which struck at the very root of that unity and special character as a people, affected all.

When Ezra rose from his knees he found himself surrounded by a very great congregation of men and women and children: and "the people wept very sore," and from the midst of the crowd there rose a man of the people, not a priest or Levite, who confessed the sin of which they had been guilty, and proposed that a covenant should be made "according to the law" for the sending away of the heathen women. It was not a light matter, nor was it so treated. When the people dispersed sorrowful and troubled, Ezra, bearing his share in their distress, "did eat no bread nor drink water," fasting and mourning for their transgression, and also a little, let us hope, for the hearts that were to be wrung and the houses that were to be made desolate by this decision. It is clear that his management of the matter had been conducted with the highest wisdom: for he had not himself pronounced any judgment, notwithstanding the wide commission, with power of life and death, that had been put into his hands. All his proceedings were calculated to bring home the conviction of that astonishing folly as well as sin to the minds of the offenders, so that the proposal for its rectification should proceed from themselves.

Nor was there any haste or arbitrary cruelty in the carrying out of this stern edict. Its necessity was allowed by all; but the whole city seems to have felt the inevitable misery, and sympathised with the sufferers.

"In the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month," that is to say in December, the rainy season—and probably a bad one from the repeated mention of it—the people collected from every city in Judah and Benjamin for the settlement of this sad national business. "All the people sat in the court of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain." The combination of mental and physical suffering and the influence of the floods pouring from those Eastern skies, beating upon the heads and penetrating the clinging garments of the crowd who could not find shelter under the porticoes, but had to endure the deluge as they could in the open unsheltered courts, adds a curiously graphic touch to the narrative. Wet and cold and miserable, as only the inhabitants of a hot climate can be, they stood and listened to all the transactions, and gave informally their adhesion to the great national covenant. There were, as it appeared, but a hundred and thirteen cases after all, nearly a quarter part of the offenders being priests and Levites. Ezra established a sort of commission of inquiry, which proceeded legally and with deliberate care to examine every case, while the crowd, released, stole away to their lodging under the wintry rain, everything concurring to make the occasion painful. It is very seldom that the record of bad weather comes in in Scripture to aggravate any disaster, but it is a very noticeable feature of the description here. Whether in every case the individual husband consented to make the renunciation, whether merciful constructions were allowed of any doubtful case, or even a point stretched if the poor women professed the faith of their husbands, we are not told. It seldom happens in any modern tribunal that such softening expedients do not creep in: but judgment was more stern in the elder ages. At least each wife would have her writing of divorce-

ment, and would probably consent with the patience of a creature born to slavery, to the fate which she would know must have come sooner or later. It was according to all modern codes a severe act; but it was one of the utmost necessity and wisdom for the interests of the Jews, and for the preservation of their national life—the thing, which having learned more or less their terrible lesson, they now felt must be preserved at all hazards and by any sacrifice.

Whether Ezra disappeared altogether from the scene after this trenchant act of reformation, whether he went back to Babylon to give in his report, and discharge himself of the responsibility of the supervision committed to his hands, we are not told; but many years elapse before we find him again in the exercise of his office as scribe and teacher in Jerusalem. A certain modern touch is in his character and appearance altogether, which is that of a man full of supreme earnestness for his work, and perception of national necessities, yet capable as a few reformers have been in all ages of seeing the advantage of a startling appeal to the popular imagination, a certain histrionicism, if we may use the word, a perhaps studied demonstration of real feeling, an outburst having all the force of the uncontrollable, yet so to speak, done on purpose for the sake of the impression to be produced, although absolutely true in the emotion expressed. There is no real contradiction in these words, and nothing in the least false in the course of action. He might have retired into his chamber, and uttered with strong crying and tears that prayer and confession which he made on his knees with his arms stretched out, before the Temple gates, with all the startled people crowding round, overwhelmed by the contagion of that passionate sorrow and supplication. But nothing that he could have said in the way of persuasion would probably have had

the same effect as the overmastering remorse and appeal of that prayer, poured forth as on the impulse of the moment in the shock of the news, by the great visitor clothed in all the power of Babylon, who had come up with joy to worship in the city of his fathers, and had been there suddenly prostrated by the terrible information communicated to him. The effect upon the imagination and conscience of the assembled Jews was tremendous, as he had intended it to be; and yet in no way had the boundaries of truth been transgressed.

Whether the after result was as complete as Ezra hoped may remain a question; for the same difficulty seems to have recurred later, even in such an astonishing instance as that of the high priest Eliashib, who is mentioned as the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, and in consequence showing special favour to him and his secretary Tobiah, who was also highly connected by intermarriage with that exalted Jewish family. This case, however, may have been so far modified that Sanballat had the blood of Israel in him, being a Samaritan: and that the law might have been stretched to permit or at least to sanction alliances already formed, with those who though not of the special seed of Judah were still more or less Jews, sharing many characteristics of the chosen race.

CHAPTER II.

NEHEMIAH.

THE mission of Ezra was a special one of deep importance to the Jewish nation as cutting off the possibilities of relapse into the one master-sin which had heretofore been their bane, and cleansing their internal economy; but it was brief and sudden and involved no external advance either in the great constructions going on on all sides, or the defence of the nation from its outward enemies. Another personage very unlike Ezra, but still more distinct and full of character, now appears against that tumultuous background of the Jewish capital, so full of rebellions and sudden repentances, the rising and falling of a popular tide, more marked, perhaps, in its small stream of existence than it would have been within more extended limits. The Jews in Babylon fall altogether out, in a few generations, from the story of their nation; they had made their choice to remain there, in some cases, no doubt, willingly, in some with painful submission to a bondage of circumstances which they had not strength or courage to break. They had been on the verge of a universal massacre when saved by the interposition of Esther; they were subject to all the vagaries of a monarch's caprice and the hatred of a vizier; but at the same time they were wealthy and safe from want and the dangers of every day, which

were compensations for the want of freedom, and the, by this time, chiefly sentimental woes of exile. At the same time there can be no doubt that they were deeply interested in the story of their brethren, and the progress of affairs at Jerusalem, and that the travellers who went and came, whether on imperial business, or about their own affairs, were eagerly surrounded and questioned whenever they appeared. By this means, and by such lingering slowly-conveyed letters as were possible, they must have heard of the successive troubles and triumphs of their race, of the delays of the Temple-building, consequent on the necessity of housing the pilgrims and their families, of the slow work of clearing the ruins, of the opposition of hostile neighbours keeping back now a band of workmen, now a convoy of cedar, of the sudden alarms of a threatened attack, the constant state of harassed watchfulness in which the enemies without kept the defenceless colony, encamped within those broken walls which could not resist any systematic assault. They must have heard, too, of the completion at last of the great work with commemorative meetings and sympathetic rejoicings among themselves; and of Ezra's mission with probably less sympathy than reprobation of the weak brethren who thus risked a new downfall for such a perishing thing as a foreign wife. The interest with which every detail would be received even when the eager listeners were no more than grandchildren or great-grandchildren of the captivity, is plain enough; they listened for every rumour with the strained attention which was more private and personal than public interest generally is, following their distant brethren through stage after stage. And when the renewed Jerusalem became an established fact, once more a city full of people, full, at least in the Temple treasury, of wealth, it is natural to imagine that their

satisfaction and joy blinded them a little to the dangers still surrounding that capital of their race, replanted in the midst of enemies, and with very ineffectual means of defence. They had already subscribed and offered a great deal for this vast national work: it is very probable that they now felt they had done enough.

This, however, was not the sentiment of one young man, of the class of those Hebrew courtiers who had found so much acceptance with all the monarchies in Babylon, both of Assyrian and Persian race: and the narrative carries us at once to the palace of the ancient potentate, the great Xerxes, where he dwelt at Shushan —to the vast cool courts, emblazoned with stately decoration, and full of a picturesque and ever-varying Eastern crowd of courtiers and suppliants. Among these was a group, brown and travel-worn, of messengers from Jerusalem, to which the king's cupbearer Nehemiah, in the rich apparel of those that dwell in kings' houses, drew hastily near to ask what was the news. The news was not cheerful. The population of Jerusalem, "the remnant that was left of the captivity," were in trouble and alarm because of the broken walls and vacant gateways which left the way of access into the city free to every enemy, doubly dangerous from the fact that the whole surrounding country was full of hostile bands. Nehemiah was deeply moved by these tidings: and he was a man full of energy, little apt to content himself with expressions of sympathy. A sudden resolution sprang up in his breast. He wept and fasted and mourned "certain days," praying and imploring "the Lord God of heaven"—which seems to have been the special title of God among the Persians—to have mercy upon his people and to grant the prayer which he, Nehemiah, should soon make to his master, "this man" into whose presence he was about to be called to fulfil

his period of service. "I had not been aforetime sad in his presence," Nehemiah says in his autobiography; for he was young, a man of conscious power, doing whatever his hand found to do with all his might. The king, it is evident, took a kind interest in his attendants, and he remarked at once the cupbearer's change of mien. It was a cheerful office, and the clouded looks of him who poured out the wine diminished the king's satisfaction in the draught. He paused to inquire what was the matter, with real interest. "This can be nothing but sorrow of heart." Nehemiah was "very sore afraid" notwithstanding the paternal kindness of his monarch. He answered—with an internal prayer that God would give him favour in his master's sight: "O king, live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

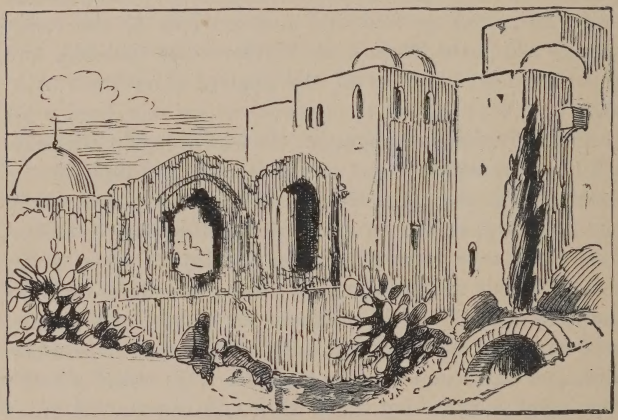
Artaxerxes must have been by this time well acquainted with the necessities of Jerusalem and her frequent appeals to his charity. He answered indulgently as who should say, "What is wanted now?" They must have been good and faithful servants so unfailing was his toleration and bounty for those Jews, of whose allegiance, as a people having nothing to gain by any political overthrow, he must have been certainly assured. When Nehemiah made his prayer to be sent to Jerusalem that he might build the ruined walls, the king would seem to have made no objection except a flattering question as to how long the journey was, and when he might be expected to return; and granted him letters "to the keepers of the king's forest" for timber, and recommendations to "the governors beyond the river" to further his undertaking in every way. It would seem that Nehemiah was also invested with the authority of governor or Tirshatha, there being at the time no sole

responsible authority in the city, but only a council of rulers, chiefly priests, with, perhaps, the advice and help of Ezra, whom we find once more in Jerusalem after an interval of twenty years, on the arrival of his successor in the Scripture records. Nehemiah took with him no such Jewish contingent as that which had followed Ezra: a significant fact as showing that the number of those willing to undertake hardship and unsettlement of life for the sake of their religion and nation was now exhausted. But the new Tirshatha had with him instead an escort of "captains of the army and horsemen" to guard him from the danger of the way.

For three days after his arrival Nehemiah would seem to have rested from his journey and apparently said nothing of his special object. We may understand that he was received and acknowledged at once as in authority over the city, the priests being in no condition to oppose any of his requirements, and probably having no wish to do so: for the succour of a strong officer of the empire backed by certain spears, would be no small comfort to them in face of the continued strife round about, and the machinations of enemies not powerful enough to attack but continually threatening. After this period of rest Nehemiah rose one night when all was still in the city—"I and some few men with me"—and went out to reconnoitre. His attendants followed on foot while he rode round Jerusalem, coming out by "the gate of the valley," a gate opening upon the valley of Hinnom in something of the position of the present Jaffa gate, or a little farther to the south at the extreme angle of the city walls. This would bring him out on the slopes of Zion below the tower of David, to the path which skirted the south wall, leading downward across the ravine of the Tyropœon valley, past the pools of

Siloam and the gardens of Ophel till he reached the valley of the Kedron, along which he rode "in the night," as he repeats, "and viewed the wall." We may take it for granted that the moon shone over the well of Job, the widening valley towards the south, and the dark hill of evil counsel: upon the outer wall of the Temple enclosure, where Solomon's great blocks of stone were still fixed everlasting on their foundation of rock: and glimmered in the pool of Siloam and the glittering thread of Kedron, making fantastic fortifications of the rocky village which the Phœnician builders had founded, and throwing long shadows of the gnarled olive-trees upon that spot, ever sacred to memory, where our Lord went through His hour of anguish. It was probably the same road as that which Jesus and His disciples took in the darkening of the night from the traditionary spot where the Last Supper was eaten, to the enclosure of Gethsemane. But that was still far in the future when Nehemiah and his party stumbled among the dark hillocks and inspected the broken walls. At this spot the outer wall of the Temple enclosure is now the wall of Jerusalem, and crowns a steep bank which is in itself a fortification of nature: but then, it would appear, an outer wall of defence doubled the strength of the city and the holy place. There, it is said, he "turned back, and entered again by the gate of the valley" by which he had come out; the natural sense of which is that he stopped halfway where the traditional Bethesda glimmered black in shadow under the side wall of the Temple and took no trouble with the other fortifications where the wall tends towards the north. Perhaps the city then extended but little beyond that point: and he must have seen the state of the northern wall on his arrival and probably did not need to repeat the investigation; the ruins there, always the point of attack, being in all

probability so conspicuous as to require no private examination. It was on the next morning, probably, after this secret circuit, that he called the rulers together and explained to them his special mission. "Let us rise up and build," was their immediate reply. There could be no doubt about the necessity of the work, and probably Nehemiah's plan which he divulged to them, by which every man should take part in the



NORTH-EAST CORNER OF WALL, TEMPLE ENCLOSURE (HARAM-ESH-SHERIF).

labour, depending upon no slow progress of hired workmen, but carrying on the whole simultaneously, each division of the city and every family of importance working at its own portion, commended itself at once to the minds of the ecclesiastics who probably, unaccustomed to such practical matters, had thought of nothing but the risks and cost of a long undertaking, calling the attention of foes outside, and perhaps drawing upon themselves direct attack.

Here the opponents and enemies of Jersualem come

clearly into sight, watching with jealous eyes all that was being done. Were they actually in the city, overflowing the chamber in the Temple itself which Eliashib, the high priest (though no traitor), had given up to them in consideration of relationship? or were they hanging about the outskirts with the usual armed attendance of Eastern chiefs, hearing everything that went on, and ever ready for hostilities and to stop any dangerous movement. "Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant (an Ammonite), and Geshem the Arabian," are the three chiefs whose names are suddenly brought before us. "They laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, 'What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?'" Nehemiah, however, gave them no light upon his plan, nor even upon the high authority which had been committed to him, but went on quietly organising his work. "Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem," he said. The traditionary enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans, kept up as we know for hundreds of years, evidently originated in the proceedings of this period and the obstinate but fruitless attempts made by the mixed race to crush the Jews of the captivity and prevent them from regaining their independence; a course of action natural enough if we remember that, as has been seen, their daughters were treated as heathens, and cut off from the holy city, though they were themselves conscious and proud of an Israelitish descent. That affront, never to be forgotten, had, no doubt, exasperated the original jealousy which made the Samaritans conspire against the peace of Jerusalem, and the re-erection of the holy place: and which now burst forth in many demonstrations of exaggerated spite and ill-feeling—which were, however, impotent in face of a strong man like Nehemiah, and the authority from headquarters with which he was charged.

And then the plan, which, no doubt, he had matured in his mind during the long days and nights of his journey, probably with the help of some rude image of the beloved city such as that upon Ezekiel's tile, or the detailed and often-repeated descriptions upon which the childhood of the sons of the captivity was nourished—was carried suddenly and at once into effect. When the common crowd opened its eyes in the morning there was already a murmur of activity in the city, of the masons' mallets and the movements of the labourers, and the sound of the great stones rolled or lifted into place, proceeding from every quarter. If there were any of Sanballat's or Tobiah's belongings in that large chamber in the Temple which Eliashib had cleared out for them of the stores for which it was properly intended—how astonished must they have been to see Eliashib himself superintending the building of his portion of the wall, he and his brethren with their robes girded, if not with trowel and mallet in their own hands, yet, no doubt, busy in the humbler occupation of bringing up the materials and pushing forward the work.

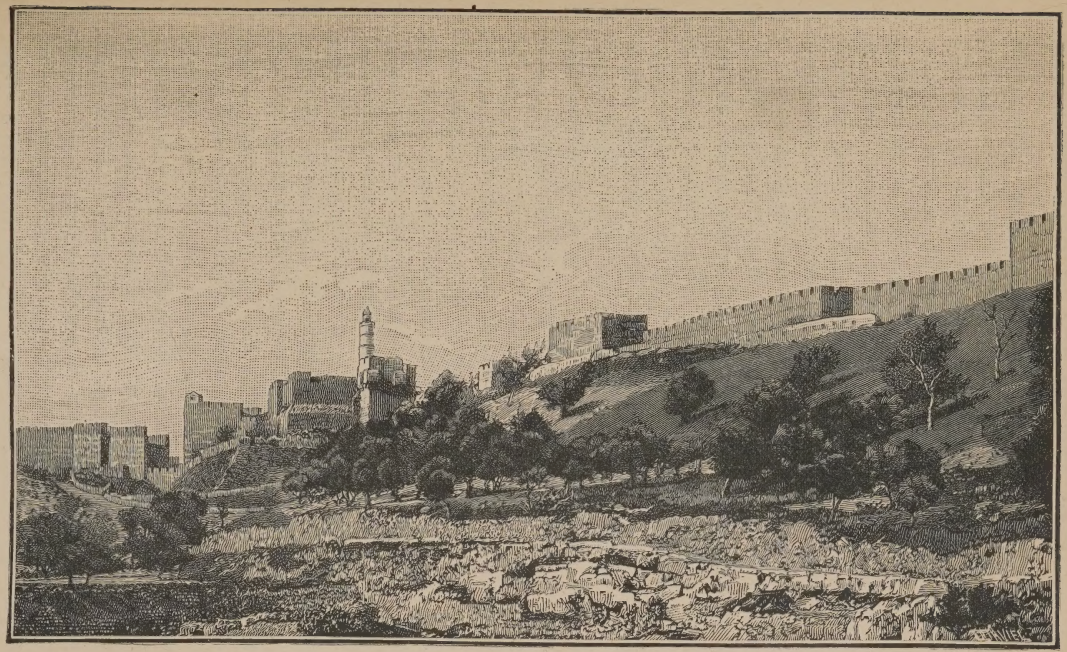
The high priest's portion was from the sheep gate—that by which the animals intended for sacrifice were brought up to the Temple, supposed to be in the eastern wall, somewhere near and above the pool of Bethesda, where the north wall of the Temple enclosure forms an angle—to the tower of Meah or Hananeel, unknown to modern topography. If it was the wall of their own special domain which they fortified it would be towards the south that they would labour, on that side of the Temple square which now forms part of the external fortifications: next to the priests started at the same morning hour the men of Jericho: next to them Zaccur the son of Imri: next to him the sons of Hassenaah who built the fish gate, believed to be in the north wall from which

opened the road to Galilee. Whether these indications are to be trusted or not it is difficult to make out; the important matter is that more than thirty groups of labourers, each under the command of a well-known member of the community, began at once on the great work: each pursuing his neighbours in the emulation of eager and patriotic toil, not a matter of words but of independent and cheerful manual labour.

Nothing could have been better calculated to raise the spirit of the nation, cowed by much delay and mismanagement, by the harassing treatment to which they were subjected without, and the want of any strong ruler within, than this outburst of activity—the very air quickening round them with the sound of the tools, the shouts and outcries with which men everywhere relieve the strain of labour, the bustling of the overseers new to such work, and, no doubt, full of anxiety and overcare. No one was left to criticise or frame objections save the Tirshatha making his rounds, stirring every set of builders to renewed vigour, rewarding with a quick glance of satisfaction, a word of praise and encouragement, those who made the best progress—especially those who completed their own share and were ready to help others, like the men of Tekoah, who, though their nobles stood aloof, repaired not only their own portion, but a part of the wall on the other side near Ophel, which was the special charge of the Nethinims or servants of the Temple. It was not wonderful that the ill-disposed neighbours watching outside what was going on in Jerusalem should be roused to a frenzy of rage and oppositon when the meaning of all this stir burst upon them. "What are the people about?" cried Sanballat, "will they fortify themselves? will they make an end in one day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish that was burned?" His spite-

ful outcry gives us a still clearer view of what was going on; for this, no doubt, was exactly what they were doing, raising the great stones to which the burning had done little harm out of the masses of broken lime and fragments, and placing them once more in their old courses. Tobiah the Ammonite was more spiteful still. "That which they build, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall," cried this enraged looker-on whose wish was father to the thought. "Hear, O our God!" cries Nehemiah in the fervour of his indignant earnestness, "for we are despised!" But the rage of disappointed malice only confirmed the resolution of the city. "So built we the wall: for the people had a mind to work."

When, however, Sanballat saw that his floutings had no effect he and his friends seem to have held a consultation whether it would not be a wise thing to make a raid upon Jerusalem before the fortifications were completed. No doubt there were plenty of spies and informers on both sides ready to run with a piece of news from one to another; and Nehemiah was not long in hearing of the intended movement against him. The builders on the north side, which was that most open to attack, would also be aware of the comings and goings, the bands from different quarters drawing together, making a brave show upon the rising ground, the little troops of horsemen who would ride down the Kedron valley, and point out to each other with flouts and shouts of laughter the progress of the work, such walls! as a fox might break down. The wall had risen to about half its intended height by this time round the entire town, one band of workmen meeting another: and the labour was severe. There was "much rubbish" which, no doubt, crumbled away under the feet of the builders and impeded every step, and "the strength of the bearers



WESTERN WALL OF JERUSALEM, WITH JAFFA GATE.

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of burdens" began to give way. Then the Jews who had been called up from the country to aid in the work were full of alarm for what might befall them as they returned to their villages, especially those who dwelt upon the north road towards Samaria—an alarm increased by urgent messages from their homes, from timorous wives or parents left behind, begging them to return and escape from danger.

A movement of discouragement thus again came like a cloud over the city, and all might have been abandoned and the ruin left as before, had Nehemiah been less vigorous, or less determined. He seized the pause as an opportunity of re-forming the method of the labour, and rousing at the same time the warlike impulse which had begun to rise with the prospect of independence. He divided the working parties into two halves, one of which carried on the active work while the others stood behind, a guard ready for all emergencies, in mail coats, fully armed with spears, shields, and bows. And every builder girt on his sword before he took up the peaceful trowel, and every hodman carried a weapon: and the Tirshatha as he moved about from one part of the wall to another, was accompanied by a trumpeter in order to call all the forces at once to a given point if there was any sign of attack. We may be sure that ever-active Tirshatha was everywhere, seeing everything that happened, riding about up and down, through half-built street and encumbered hollows and hillocks, from the city of David down to the northern gate, and away again to that door of the king on the east side towards the sunrising, by which only princes were to enter in. High priest or learned scribe, or group of servants, or Shallum with his daughters, or that Hananiah who was the son of an apothecary, it mattered nothing to the active governor. And if there was any movement visible

in the encampment on the hill where the Samaritans lay and looked on, and raged and wondered, it is clear that the Tirshatha was there with his trumpeter ready to sound the alarm, so that every man might throw down his trowel or his hod and catch up his bow or draw his sword, while he rushed towards the centre of action. Never was a patriotic drama more strenuous, picturesque, and spirit-stirring, with such mingled sounds of labour and war, of a strong race on the alert, valiantly and cheerfully contending for its life. The men were inspired at once with patriotism and strong indignation and a sense that this was the crisis upon which the fate of Jerusalem hung.

"So we laboured in the work," says the terse and strong historian "and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared; and neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes." Perhaps if the labourers had not had this watchful unwavering band to keep them at their work the softness of use and wont might have made the tools drop from their hands, and persuaded them of the expediency of yielding to Sanballat and thus keeping on good terms with their neighbours. But Nehemiah behind, who never rested, lying down in his cloak to snatch an hour's sleep like any camel-driver, he the cupbearer of Artaxerxes the Eastern autocrat, used to perfumed baths and silken robes—would hear of no submission. "Remember me, O my God, concerning this," he cries, when he winds up the stirring story. He was a man of his age, not disposed to make light of his work, or to pretend that he did not expect a recompense; but few men have ever worked for worldly recompense as did Nehemiah, every nerve in him braced, and every faculty strengthened for the great work.

The community within was not without its troubles even while this work went on; once more there arose that cry of usury, of the pledge retained and the sons and daughters sold into bondage which was the evil against which Israel had been so specially warned, the system of ruinous loans upon land and individual belongings which is the pest of every rural system in the East —and elsewhere. The Tirshatha assailed this evil, too, with a high hand, holding out before the richer portion of the community, "the nobles and rulers," his own example. "We after our ability," he said, "have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathens; and will ye even sell your brethren?" The Jews in Babylon had been very liberal. Like the modern Jews in Europe they had sent contributions of all kinds both for the Temple and the maintenance of the city, and, no doubt, as Nehemiah says, had purchased the freedom of many of the captives who returned, and borne their expenses for the journey, only to find these returned and delivered slaves robbing the unprovided among themselves. "Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer." His remonstrance, however, was effectual for the time: it is evident that he was not a man accustomed to be resisted.

"Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from His house, and from His labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to their promise." Nehemiah again quoted his own practice of high generosity and disinterestedness, as an example for the future: at a later period, near the end of his residence at Jerusalem: when he bade the people remember how, during the twelve years in which he held the office of governor—though it was

his right in virtue of his office to receive from those under him an abundant revenue for his support and that of his household—he had accepted nothing. Former governors had been chargeable to the people, "had taken bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants have rule over the people: but so did not I, for the peace of God." He describes besides, in this sometimes almost contemptuous summary, how he had held a sort of royal state, an open table, entertaining like a king, a hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers daily "besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us," a curious addition. Thus he lived, always with a lofty scorn of all meanness, giving freely, accepting nothing, with perhaps, we may divine, a certain scorn as of a high official of the empire, for the pettiness of the province, notwithstanding his passionate devotion to the holy place and to the faith of his fathers. Such a mingling of high enthusiasm for a great object, with an impassioned disdain of all the small self-interests that gather about it and the unelevated persons who carry it out, is not unusual in great national movements.

We need not dwell upon the devices of Sanballat and his band who for all their jibes and boasting did not venture near the half-built walls, nor had the courage to assault the builders with that keen decisive governor behind them, who could not be taken by surprise. They endeavoured to inveigle Nehemiah out of the city on the pretence of a quite unnecessary conference; then they accused him by "an open letter" intended like that of Rabshakeh in Hezekiah's time for the ears of the populace, of wishing to make himself a king, and threatened to report to Artaxerxes that he was a rebel against the imperial authority. Then finding their attempts unsuccessful and all their wiles powerless against him, they

suborned one of the priests to persuade him to take refuge in the Temple. "For they will come to slay thee, yea, in the night they will come to slay thee." The Tirshatha confounded this deceitful priest with his usual stern calm and that indignant contempt which such futile temptations deserved. "Should such a man as I flee?" he asked with noble scorn. The insignificance of them all before him, both enemies and false friends, and the crowd which is overawed by his greatness, but never understands him, is more conspicuous in his simple record than if it had been descanted upon by hosts of eulogists. It is scarcely in nature that such a man should not despise the rabble which trembled at his look and promised everything—yet fell back into its unpatriotic alliances as soon as his back was turned. It is the never-failing experience of the rulers of men.

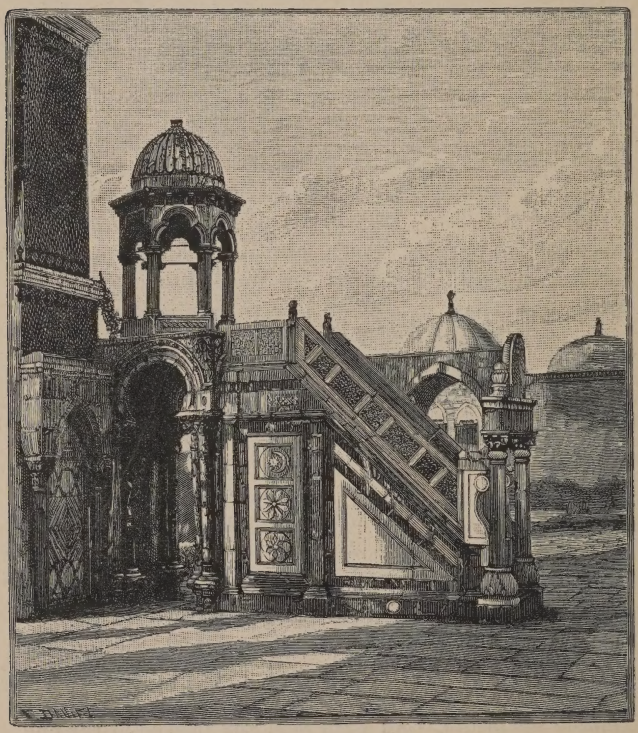
But in the meantime he accomplished his work and reorganised the entire society. The most picturesque and striking ceremony of all, that with which Nehemiah wound up his great undertaking, was the dedication of the walls which the people under his constant stimulation and care had built. The Levites were sought, out of all the villages in which (in the intervals of their service at Jerusalem) they lived, and all the singers and musicians with their instruments. "Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall," says the governor, "and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall . . . and the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them and the half of the people." Thus they went, winding round and round the new-built ramparts and by the gates—each with its great lock and bar, like those, perhaps, which are still used in Damascus and other Syrian cities, a bar with a rudely fitted perpendicular bolt with iron projec-

tions falling into certain perforations in it, which rises and drops by means of a wooden key. The procession was attended, each half of it by the priests with the trumpets, and a choir of singers, singing, perhaps, those songs of the pilgrims with which the long and dreary way from Babylon had been lightened. They circled the city from the great pools of Gihon in the west, and the stairs of the city of David, that bridge that traversed the Tyropœon valley, and along the irregular length of the north wall whence they could see the tents of their Samaritan enemies on the hill of Samuel or Mount Scopus, so often thereafter to be crowned with the armies of more formidable invaders: while the other party made the round on the southern side above the valley of Hinnom, and along the front of the Temple, both coming together with whatever ensigns of triumph they might carry, with the glowing colour of Eastern gala dress, and the white robes of the Levites, and the sound of the singing and shouts of the multitude, until the marching lines met on the ramparts of the Temple wall, opposite Olivet, and stood awhile to make their thanksgiving, governor and princes and priests and people: "and the singers sang loud": for every evil prophecy was confounded and every fear quenched and the work accomplished, so that all the world might see. "Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: their wives also and their children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off."

On another occasion, probably immediately after the completion of the walls but before that ceremony, before the men who had helped in the building withdrew to their villages, they gathered "as one man in the court before the water-gate" and a request was made to Ezra the scribe, here re-introduced suddenly into the history,

that he would bring out the book of the law and read it to the people. This had been his habit according to his own record many years before, and either he had been absent during the troubled period before Nehemiah's appearance in Jerusalem, or engaged, perhaps, in the business belonging to his special profession of managing the registers and all the laws and regulations of the city, since no previous mention of him appears in the story of Nehemiah: yet here at last we find him again, when the Tirshatha's great work was over, coming forward into the foreground in his natural position as an interpreter of the law. He was placed in a "pulpit of wood made for the purpose," such, probably, as the readers of the Koran occupy at the present day in the mosques; and round him stood a band of priests, giving the sanction and weight of their presence to this popular expositor. He read from the morning till midday "before the men and women and all that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to hear the law." When he opened the book all the people stood up. "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." This scene opens upon us like a picture in the ancient usage of instruction still familiar in the East; it must have taken place somewhere about the spot where now stands the exquisite open-air pulpit of present use high in the midst of the Temple enclosure. As Ezra read and paused at the end of some difficult passage, the priests took it up in turn and "caused the people to understand," expounding and explaining. And when all the laws were read in their ears which they had transgressed without, it is possible, in the turmoil of the time, knowing them, great compunction and remorse arose in their hearts. "And the

people wept." But the Tirshatha, wise and wholesome man, would not have his triumph spoiled. He was a peremptory ruler, strong in his ideas of work and recom-



OPEN-AIR PULPIT IN THE TEMPLE ENCLOSURE.

pense, and much of Solomon's opinion that there was a time for everything. He desired them to postpone their penitence to another day. "This day is holy to the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. Go your way, eat the

fat, and divide the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto the Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

The insistence upon this point is curious and exhilarating. The Tirshatha would have none of their lamentations, even though these lamentations were for sin: and the Levites were set to "still" the people, repeating that exhortation "Hold your peace, neither be ye sorry." In the end the multitude responded to this repeated injunction and ate and drank and sent portions, and made merry, "because they had understood the words that were declared unto them": indeed a very sufficient reason for such a course.

The postponed penitence had its course on the twenty-fourth day of the same month, when a fast was held as solemn as the thanksgiving, and the people put off all their coloured garments and put themselves in sackcloth with earth upon their heads and "separated themselves from all strangers": that is, no doubt, closed the Temple gates against every intruder, and stood as a nation confessing their national sins before God. The Psalm which they sang is a confession of their shortcomings and of the grace of God which had restored again and again His erring people, and their services ended with a proposal, in which is the very soul of the determined Nehemiah, their inspiration in all national matters—that a solemn covenant and promise now and for ever of faithfulness to the God who had been so gracious to them, should be signed and sealed, as a pledge that they would err no more. The peremptory optimist who was at their head must surely have had secret misgivings of the everlasting efficacy of such a covenant: but pious men and great Reformers of far later date than Nehemiah have tried the expedient as he did, undiscouraged by much

failure: and we can scarcely help thinking of Knox and his followers and of the Covenants of Scotland, when we read the list of "those who sealed" and "entered into a curse and into an oath to walk in God's law"—that is, who invoked a curse upon their own heads if they did not keep that vow. No doubt it gave a solace to the heart of Nehemiah to leave them so bound against all further possibilities of transgression—bound by seal and signature, though few of them, we may believe, could write—signs of a bargain which would be, it was to be hoped, more effectual than private resolution: to do all they ought to do, to make no mixed marriages, hold no market on the Sabbath day, and maintain the ordinances of the Temple, the sacrifices and the tithes, the first-fruits and offerings. When these vows were put upon parchment and laid up in the holy place was not all done that could be done to bind a people at once so fickle and so strange?

But whether the Tirshatha remained to govern the city, or whether he went back to pour out again the wine of Artaxerxes, or to be promoted after all his labours to some more important post in the imperial government we know nothing. The record ends here so far as the Scripture history is concerned, leaving Jerusalem in outward peace, but as yet little more than a ghost of herself, with elaborate laws, and a hierarchy carefully arranged, yet but half populated, with a few scattered villages alone to keep up her prestige and her claim to be considered among the nations. The stronghold, however, was again safe from all but imperial arms, the sanctuary cleansed, the race for once convinced that apart from God and his Divine protection they had no standing or security in the world.

CHAPTER III.

THE MACCABEES.

NOTHING can be more remarkable than the difference we find in this ancient history when the guiding thread of Scripture fails. The Apocryphal books are extremely interesting and full of graphic details, but the difference between them and the canonical books is very much like that which exists between Shakespeare and the other dramatists of the Elizabethan age. Many of these are great writers taken by themselves, but when they are placed beside our supreme poet they pale and fade like the stars at midday.

> "Ye common people of the sky
> What are ye when the moon is nigh?"

The difference is much of the same kind when we turn to the history of the Maccabees after the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah. The books of Kings and Chronicles are full of curt passages, records from which the life has well-nigh gone, but these are redeemed by passages glowing with the movement and force of existence, with features of individual life which nothing can make antiquated, which are as true to human nature now as they were when the events recorded came to pass. But in none of them do we lose our way, nor do our heads spin round as in the fightings of the Maccabees: in none of

them does the curious mixture of pure legend show itself in mingled extravagance and subtility, as in some of the other Apocryphal books. The narrative of Esdras, for example, the amplified and legendary tale of which the book of Ezra is the text, is in many parts a captivating story. Its account of the manner in which the distresses of the Jews were brought before King Darius is like a chapter out of the *Arabian Nights*. The three young men in the antechamber, and their emulation as to who shall write the wisest sentence, and the recompense that shall be given him: the ready acquiescence of the monarch in this competition: the success of the third competitor and his statement of the boon he desires, which is not to be clothed in purple and to sleep upon a couch of gold, or even to sit next to Darius for his wisdom and to be called the king's cousin, but that Jerusalem may be succoured and built up: make such a tale as Scheherezade might have told to her Sultan. But then the thread of the story melts away and we know no more of the three young men (one of them vaguely called Zorobabel as if in some confusion of identity with the Jewish prince of Cyrus' days) nor hear of any connection they had with that extremely real, succinct, and veritable personage—Ezra the scribe, whose account of himself and his mission is so genuine and satisfactory. The chronology of Scripture is often difficult, but that of the Apocryphal books is impossible. It is Nebuchadnezzar's captain whose head Judith carries in her bag, notwithstanding that her time is after the captivity and long after the very empire of that monarch has been overthrown. De Bracy's famous description in *Ivanhoe* of how the tribe of Benjamin in their difficulties sought counsel of the Pope is scarcely more wildly astray. These are examples of how a story is told which has gone from one mouth to another through a few hundred years.

The critics who consider this to be the way in which the whole Scriptural record was built up have not apparently remarked this real illustration of what the outcome is in such a case.

The narrative of the Maccabees, though confused, is a more solid piece of history. By the time it was written the world had attained the historical age, and there are other records with which to compare and correct it. It is another chapter of the long-continued, little-varying story, save that in this, as in a secular chronicle, the connection between the sins of the people and their punishment is not insisted upon, and the political influence of situation and character is more clearly revealed. Jerusalem is a little realm of marked and peculiar institutions, many of which offend and irritate her neighbours, as a profession of superior sanctity or enlightenment invariably does offend and irritate. These neighbours are always asking the world and each other, What is she, this little mountain city to make so much commotion about her Temple, her rites, her claim to be more wise than other people, her Sabbaths, forsooth, as if she were more hard worked on the other six days of the week, or had more to show for her labour than her neighbours?

And on the other hand, the little country of Judea, the little obstinate wealthy town with her Temple, still more or less lined and furnished with gold, and her precious vessels, always a tempting prey, lay right in the way between two strong and warlike powers, the empire of Egypt on the one hand, the northern empire once of Sennacherib, once of Cyrus, once of Alexander, on the other, between which there was a continual struggle. Nothing could be more dangerous than such a position, especially as it would seem through all her history that Jerusalem was most apt to take the Egyptian side, where a race ancient and changeless as her own had stood

against many incursions of the continually modified and altered empire of the north: until altered itself by that partition of the ancient world which follows the conquests of the Greeks. There is, however, a special bitterness in the many wars of devastation which swept over the devoted city, which adds something more than the mere horrors of invasion, terrible as these were, to her tragic history. The continual insults to her religion, the swine sacrificed on the altar, the overthrow of all her characteristic customs, done with a fury and ferocity which seem special to this place alone, is very remarkable. One would imagine that the very existence of such a stronghold of national worship folded in the hills was an affront and offence to the world about. They left the plains on either side, to crush that sentiment of freedom, of individuality, and what was still more, of unbroken immemorial faith, which stood in the middle of the way.

At last the indignities and insults of their conquerors roused the spirit of the victims, and for the first time in their history the Jews rose for their city and won it back. On other occasions they had been delivered by miraculous interposition, chiefly by the withdrawal of their enemies — for their struggle had been generally defensive only, and the issue of a siege is always destruction when there are forces enough to blockade and shut it up completely. In the case of the Maccabees they had the advantage of being outside the walls, with the mountains behind them to retire to, and room to attack as well as to defend. A valiant family of priestly race, father and five sons, inhabiting the village of Modin near Bethel were the leaders and inspirers of this great patriotic movement; Matthias, or Mattathias, the father of Judas Maccabeus "of the sons of Joarib," was the man who struck the first blow. According to the

narrative in the book of Maccabees the commissioner of Antiochus had reached this little town among the hills with authority to enforce the submission of the villagers according to the method pursued afterwards in the persecutions of the Christians at Rome, by requiring them to sacrifice "according to the king's commandment" upon an idolatrous altar: and probably the officers who had conquered Jerusalem anticipated no difficulty with this petty town. They called upon Matthias first as "an honourable and great man" to perform the necessary test of obedience. It is quite possible that these officials might be prepared for some show of reluctance and opposition, for they seem to have stood parleying with the priest long enough to permit some sycophant eager to curry favour to rush in before and light the incense, or kill the victim. Matthias turned upon the apostate with righteous indignation: "he was inflamed with zeal and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to show his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran and slew him upon the altar." This sudden outburst of noble wrath must have roused the spirit of the multitude, for it is evident that the proselytising party could make no stand against the father and his sons—"Also the king's commissioner who compelled men to sacrifice he killed, and the altar he pulled down."

The sudden flame of an unexpected rebellion so swift and decisive must have ended in the destruction or flight of the strangers: and henceforward the die was cast for Matthias and his family. He "cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law and maintaineth the covenant let him follow me." After the degradation and despair which we have seen to steal over the Jewish race in the later years of her unfaithful kings: after the downheartedness of the captivity; this sudden trumpet voice recalls

the heroes of Judah, the mighty men of valour, David and his captains, stout Joab who feared no face of man. They had to form their band and flee to the mountains forthwith, leaving their little abandoned town to the mercy of the invaders: but when they were protected by the invulnerable hills the party of the patriots grew daily. Intolerable oppression had at last roused beyond endurance a too long-suffering race. Some, we are told, not brave enough for open resistance, fled to the wilderness hoping to be safe there, but were overtaken by an expedition from Jerusalem who assailed them on the Sabbath day. The multitude, unwarlike, unofficered probably, clinging with heroic weakness to their rule, would not fight on that holy day, and were massacred like sheep. "They answered them not, neither cast they a stone at them, nor stopped the places where they lay hid, but said, Let us die in our innocency: heaven and earth shall testify for us that ye put us to death wrongfully." "A thousand souls of men," whole families, including wives and children (who probably made resistance impossible) thus perished without striking a blow.

These meek religious martyrs, however, raised such a storm in Judah as carried all barriers away. "When Matthias and his friends understood thereof they mourned for them right sore. And one of them said to another, 'If we all do as our brethren have done, and fight not for our lives and laws against the heathen, they will now quickly root us out of the earth.' At that time they decreed saying, 'Whosoever shall come to make battle with us on the Sabbath day we will fight against him: neither will we die all as our brethren that were murdered in the secret places.'" This is the first appearance, in our knowledge of the Jews, of the new kind of idolatry which had succeeded in their strange

and perverse minds the dominion of idols. They had now seized upon their law with all its severe conditions and put that in the place of God. The reign of that tremendous formalism which came to a climax in the time of our Lord, when a breach of the Sabbath was a capital crime and the husks and outside regulations of devotion had taken the place of the spirit, is thus introduced with pathetic circumstances which silence even the impatience of the bystander looking on at so unnecessary a sacrifice. But Matthias was a man of sense, it is evident, as well as a hero, and able to interpret according to the spirit, not exclusively by the letter, the oracles of God. The book of Maccabees, however, is full of instances of this growing dominion of the external law, and also with supernatural appearances and prodigies altogether unknown to the sober pages of authentic Scripture, and affording an excellent example of what such a record is when compiled from primitive documents as this chronicle acknowledges itself to be. For young men in shining armour, upon radiant steeds of heaven, come forth to head the Jewish armies, and angels paralyse the impious invader when he lays hands upon the treasure of the Temple. Such occurrences never take place in the authentic record, save in its very earliest pages: and even then the mysterious "Captain of the Lord's host," who appears to Joshua, is a veiled and mystic figure quite unknown to the crowd. Neither the ancient kings of Judah nor strenuous Nehemiah on the city wall have any such direct succours from the skies.

It is strange to find ourselves, in this confused history of a disturbed country full of perpetual wars, suddenly brought face to face with classical names and the materials of a wider-spreading world history, revealing the extraordinary development which had taken place since the wars of the Jews with the little cluster of Canaan-

itish nations, when Damascus and then Nineveh and then Babylon were the homes of the conquerors, and Greeks and Romans were unknown. Lysimachus, Nicanor, Gorgias, are the titles of the opposing generals, Menelaus is an apostate priest, "Quintus Memmius and Titus Manlius, ambassadors of the Romans" send letters to the Jews. All is changed from the old world, yet there is little change in the one obstinate self-contained people which holds the central place, though visibly surrounded by supernatural help as it never was in the older authentic days.

The same thing had happened to Jerusalem which had happened to her before. The city "lay void as a wilderness, the sanctuary was trodden down, and aliens kept the stronghold: the heathen had their habitation in the place: and joy was taken from Jacob, and the pipe with the harp ceased." But the people were no longer captive nor languishing terrified in scattered villages. They ranged the country outside as David's bands did, under their bold leader "who was like a lion," always with their eyes fixed upon the deserted domes and towers, the silent and desolate city over which the flag of the conqueror waved from the heights of Zion. Other cities have been dear, but none so prized, so sacred as this. To think of the abomination of desolation in those deserted courts and profaned sanctuaries was anguish to every Jew. They roamed the country round always with longing looks reverting to their holy and beautiful place: lying in wait for every advantage, rushing down from their mountains upon the unexpecting army of their adversaries when the other half of it had become involved in those rocky gorges in pursuit of them: too rapid to await attack, taking everywhere the offensive, in night surprises and sudden assaults, a handful of desperate men rushing at the throat of an astonished

host and by their daring dispersing it on every side. Their watchword between themselves was at one time "the help of God," and at another "the victory of God." The Lord of Hosts was their leader, and their whole trust in Him, so that no man took thought of the odds against him. "They had neither armour nor swords to their minds": but "the camp of the heathen was strong and well harnessed, and compassed round about by horsemen: and these were expert in war," while as for the Jews, their leaders were priests, and many Levites were, no doubt, in their ranks. But what did that matter so long as God was with them? When the trumpets sounded they flung themselves headlong like lions on their prey. In the great army which Lysias led against them were a number of merchants with "silver and gold very much" who had come into the camp "to buy the children of Israel for slaves," and whose flight, when Lysias himself turned tail, with their money-bags, it must have been good to see. Let us hope that the Hebrew warriors overtook some of those intending purchasers and captured the money which was provided to secure bargains of their flesh and blood.

The camp of the Greeks was at Emmaus, which, as we all know, was but threescore furlongs from Jerusalem—and when the victorious Jews, having encountered in succession the main army, which did not look for any such attack, and the army of Gorgias coming back, baffled and weary, from its expedition to the mountains in search of them: found themselves masters of the deserted camp with all its treasures "and gold and much silver and blue silk and purple of the sea and great riches," they did not linger among the spoil, valuable to them as that must have been. "Then said Judas and his brethren, Behold our enemies are discomfited: let us go up to cleanse and dedicate the sanctuary." They

ascended accordingly, unmolested, and took possession of the deserted city. The little garrison in the citadel were possibly restrained by regard for their own safety from making any hostile demonstrations at the sight of those Hebrew bands which they were evidently powerless to resist. The Maccabees found not only the sanctuary desolate as they were aware, but "shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest," a sign of neglect which would seem to have gone to their hearts. (The Temple enclosure now is more than half covered with grass, and with many fine trees, some of which look as if they might have survived the vicissitudes of many centuries.) This forlorn condition of the precincts called forth great lamentations, rending of clothes and every sign of horror and consternation. "They fell down flat upon their face, and blew an alarm with the trumpets, and cried toward heaven." These expressions bring forcibly and vividly before us the character of the rude and simple army, unwordly bands taken from the plough and the field, with their harsh trumpets sounding for all music, and their minds on fire with the true passion of religion and patriotism. The Temple, however, seems, though profaned, to have been left intact, only the priests' chambers being pulled down. It was "with songs and citherns and harps and cymbals" and with the old immemorial Psalm of adoration to the Lord "for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever" that in a little while the dedication of the newly-built altar was celebrated and all the rights of sacred worship, the sacrifice and the incense, re-established, the mysterious veil hung up again with awe between the holy of holies and the gaze of the multitude. No doubt the singers found their instruments piled among the ruins in some half-destroyed chamber, or dedicated the lutes in the Greek tents to a better use than that of those songs of love and wine which were the solace of

their enemies. The sequence of events is one which we have already seen repeated over and over again in the history of Jerusalem. The Temple is profaned, it is desecrated, ruined, robbed, again and again in the troublous story: but we have but to turn the page to find the tide of power turned, the holy place recovered, the work of purification instantly recommenced, the altars rebuilt, every piece of spoil or ornament that is worthy of such high use dedicated to the decoration of that shrine at once of religion and of race. "They decked also all the forefront of the Temple with crowns of gold and with shields"—the personal ornaments and works of art which they had collected from the deserted camp. Thus had it been done for centuries past; during which the kingdom had been cut to pieces, conquered, beaten, the people led into captivity; yet always returning to regain its standing upon the sacred mount, to light again its sacrificial fires: and when it could no longer line its holy house with gold, at least to hang up the shining shields, the golden circlets won from the enemy upon gate and wall: while the song of priests and people once more and again and yet again rang high unto heaven—

"For His mercy endureth for ever."

It is curious to find, however, how completely the royal element had been eliminated out of this extraordinary and always characteristic people. It would seem as if Zerubbabel had been the last of his race who occupied any post of authority. He was not, perhaps, himself a man of strong individuality, for the impression he makes upon the record is very faint, and his very name fades away in the midst of the dissensions and controversies of the restored captivity. He had children, but they do not seem to have succeeded to any place of authority. No doubt it would have been dangerous for a people restored

by the unexpected favour of the Persian emperors to have set up their little royalty again in the face of Cyrus and Cambyses—and the race of David had sunk, it would seem, under the level of what is required for a ruler even in a subordinate position. The race of Levi had survived in greater strength. The families of the high priests could not lose their sacred right of domination descended to them from far antiquity—long before kings were thought of and from the direct appointment of God. Far more than the scattered and impoverished house of David had they retained their traditions and their power: and while the family of Zerubbabel sinks into the rank of private persons that of his colleague the priest goes on in unquestioned authority. Eliashib, though not blameless in the matter of life and discipline, had succeeded Jeshua in Ezra's time, while the sons of Zerubbabel had gone back to the original pastures at Bethlehem, from which David had been taken to be made a king. And when we come to the time of the Maccabees it is in a priestly family that the hero, or rather heroes, father and sons emulating each other in valour and patriotism—and the only real successor of the chivalrous shepherd of Bethlehem, Judas the son of Matthias, is found. The supreme authority remained in the hands of this Levitical family till it was transmitted to those of another hero of romance, the great triumphant and conquering Herod, who was not even a Jew at all. For by that time the purposes of God so long promised and determined were working towards the birth on earth of that Son of David, the Seed of the woman, in whom priesthood and kinghood were combined, and whose appearance wound up the whole economy of the ancient world, and made further returnings from captivity, further restorations of Temple and sacrifice of no need nor avail. The fact is full of awe and instruction that, after the destruction of Jeru-

salem by Titus, no attempt was made on the part of the Jews to restore the sanctuary which had been the inspiration and ruling thought of all the previous generations. It had been as completely ruined by Nebuchadnezzar, as deeply desecrated by Antiochus, not to speak of the continual offences against it of its own degenerate kings. It had been rebuilt, reconsecrated, the interrupted worship restored more times than it is easy to reckon. But after the great and wonderful tragedy which sums up its story, neither priest nor hero, neither patriot nor poet ever stirred up those dry bones again.

In the meantime, however, the family of the Maccabees had a hard fighting life, recovering and losing again in succession almost every inch of their country, although never altogether losing their hold of Jerusalem. Once they were shut up in the sanctuary itself which had independent fortifications of its own, within the outer walls, and held for their lives upon that little platform, until dangers breaking out in other parts of the empire made it policy on the parts of the Greeks to make peace with these indomitable patriots. Chief after chief of the heroic family died in battle, but was followed duly by his heir in a succession of strong and devoted men unknown before in the annals of Israel. Judas, Jonathan, Simon, and John, called Hyrcanus, carried on the noble strain, never relaxing the struggle, making alliances like kings, aiding their allies from time to time with a Hebrew contingent which seems to have struck terror everywhere by its prowess and valour.

At the end the great spirit of the race dropped, and the old too well-known course of conspiracies and internal divisions replaced the shoulder to shoulder struggle of the devoted and united family. Then Hyrcanus, the second of the name, fell into the hands of the Idumean (in the olden days he would have been called the Edom-

ite) Antipater the father of the great Herod. During this later period we find ourselves as it were suddenly brought into familiar company, among well-known names, Seleucus, Ptolemy, Antony and Cleopatra, Cæsar and Pompey. The latter of these generals took again the often-conquered city. "He found the walls from their height of almost impregnable strength with a frightful ravine in front of them," says Josephus, "while within this the Temple was so strongly fortified that even after the capture of the town it could afford a second refuge." This had already been the case as we have seen; and was to be so still more remarkably in the final and terrible struggle with Titus. It is difficult, however, now to understand what is meant by a ravine on the north side of the city, the country there being comparatively level, with nothing more than the gentlest undulations between it and the hills. "The prodigious depth of the ravine," which was filled up by Pompey's soldiers is strange to hear of; and it is a striking detail that it was during the Jewish Sabbath when the Jews "refrain their hands from every work" that he erected a shelter under which his troops could work while filling up the fosse or ravine —and that during this siege the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifice rose up without interruption to heaven, notwithstanding the showers of darts directed upon the sanctuary. The priests, Josephus informs us, continued even when the Roman army came pouring in "to carry forward the sacred services, and were slaughtered while presenting libations and burning incense." The Roman general must have been impressed by that wonderful sight; for though he went over all those sacred places thus purified with the life-blood of the ministrants at the altar, and with the keen curiosity of his race put aside even the mysterious veil and went into the holy of holies, he carried nothing away, and did

no harm to that strangely beloved and defended shrine. He restored Hyrcanus to be chief priest, and taking from the Jews the cities they had seized in better times, "confined the nation within its proper boundaries."

These continued wars, however, are far too many to find a record here. When the feeble Hyrcanus had run his course through the tortuous ways of a weak and dependent ruler, Herod the son of Antipater, his champion for a long time and general, ill-rewarded and often doubted, assumed his place. Hyrcanus had borne the title of king as well as high priest. But Herod was a Roman general, and reigned over Jerusalem by right of conquest and the strong hand, as Tetrarch of Judea. It is unnecessary to enter into his history. Once more Jerusalem was taken by the sword after a long siege and innumerable intrigues and divisions within, Herod doing his best to defend his subjects after he had subdued them, and preserving the Temple from all desecration. He restored it afterwards, as Josephus tells us, at "incalculable expense," enlarging the area, and building "ample colonnades around the holy place," which must have added greatly to the dignity and splendour of its general aspect. It was under this form that our Lord must have beheld with human eyes His Father's house, and no doubt, many of His conversations with the Jews were held in those same ample cloisters, cool and shaded, where those who spent a great part of their time in the Temple courts would find pleasant shelter. The great tower, called of Antonia, at the north-west angle of the enclosure was also built by him. Of these superstructions it is needless to say no vestige now remains.

It throws some light, however, upon the magnitudes of antique description to read the account of the Temple which this prince built to Cæsar at the sources of the Jordan. Herod, half proselyte, half heathen, had all the tolerance of paganism, and built many fanes of this kind

while beautifying the great centre of the most intensely exclusive religion of the world. "Here," says Josephus, "is a mountain whose summit lifts itself to a vast height, and close by a hollow at its base, a gloomy cavern opens from below, in which a yawning chasm descends abruptly to an immeasurable depth, containing a vast collection of still water hitherto found unfathomable by any length of line." Thus is described the picturesque cliff and bubbling waters of Banias, once known by the name of Cæsarea Philippi, the most northern spot, so far as we know, of our Lord's journeyings, where Peter's great confession was made. Perhaps these superlative adjectives applied thus to a woodland dell may make it more comprehensible that the soft slopes on the northern side of Jerusalem should appear to Pompey's troops a "frightful ravine."

The reader knows what wonderful event happened in the last days of Herod, and how, believing as he did, that One was born who was sent by God to be King of the Jews, One of whom the prophets had written, and of whom his learned councillors could tell him even the very place of the promised birth: this strange Eastern potentate in his madness put forth a bloody and a dreadful hand to nullify if he could the decree of heaven. That such a thing should have been done by an unbeliever would be natural enough—but the act of Herod was that of a man who had no apparent doubt that it was the actual ordinance of God, long ago settled and foretold, which he had attempted to make impossible. Such subtilities of the primitive mind are beyond comprehension —all the more as the man who did so had been a powerful guardian and protector of the nation. Thus his was the hand which not only tried to cut off the final and everlasting Monarch, but, at the same time, adorned Jerusalem like a bride to await His coming—glorious as in all her vicissitudes she had never been before.

VILLAGE OF BANIAS (CÆSAREA PHILIPPI), ON THE SOURCES OF JORDAN.

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The literature of this long period of disaster, captivity, and restoration is vaguely celebrated by supposition, and by that restless desire for a new hypothesis which is characteristic of the criticism of the day:—but must be left in the mist of things for which there is no evidence. A recent authority, in so dignified a medium as the Bampton Lectures, has attributed, with a wonderful sweep of bold assertion, the whole, or almost the whole, of the Psalms to the age of the Maccabees, with a hardihood of conjecture which is only permitted in discussions of the canon of Scripture. That many of these sacred songs express the feelings of the exiles no one will deny. The "horrible pit and miry clay" of Jeremiah is evidence, excellent in literature, as is that utterance of sorrow which came from the waters of Babylon. The beautiful Songs of Degrees seem to reveal to us the habit of those yearly journeys to Jerusalem which we find existing in the New Testament, with a fresh and delightful verisimilitude. Having no other evidence, the literary evidence is enough to determine these songs as the production of a people restored to their own land, going up periodically to keep the feast. Further than this it is difficult to go. The genius of the Hebrews would seem to have fallen into legendary tales and those collections of maxims which belong to the earliest habits of the race. Their sacred songs are the "wood notes wild," beautiful and sweet, of minor poets; their histories, individual and fantastical, "apocryphal," full of interest; but only as we have said like the dramatists of Shakespeare's time in comparison with him, when placed beside the Scripture record. Other light than what is to be derived from themselves there is none: and this is what, I think, those relics say.

PART IV.—THE FINAL TRAGEDY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SON OF DAVID.

THE existence of the Jewish nation after the time of the return from Babylon until that in which it once more stood forth as the glory of the whole earth, the centre of history, the most wonderful and memorable of all places in the world, was, as we have seen, little different from that of the many struggling nationalities which were finally absorbed in the great Roman empire, except for the romantic and striking episode of the Maccabees, the obstinate preservation of its special customs and worship, and the gradual development of that idolatry of the law which replaced Baal and Astarte in the mind of the nation, and produced the strange and rigid casuistical science and pietism of latter years. When the time had come for that great final tragedy which confirmed for ever the empire of Jerusalem over the world, the external circumstances of the nation had changed in many respects. Instead of the narrow limits of Judah and Benjamin, in which all sacred associations had been enclosed, the enlarged tetrarchate of Herod was full of faithful Jews outside these narrow boundaries, though never extending, as at first, throughout the ancient bound-

aries of Israel. The Samaritans still occupied the central portion of Palestine, unchanged in the divergency of faith which became conspicuous after the captivity, and holding an attitude of hostility more or less marked, though kept by imperial supervision from all overt acts. The difference, always difficult to define between that mixed race, which, if only half Jew, was yet not pagan, and insisted upon its traditions as much as did the orthodox Judean and its kindred of Judah, had consolidated into a sort of national opposition. "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." But the northern part of the kingdom had returned to its allegiance to Jerusalem, and was inhabited by vigorous and devout Jews, whose habit of going up to Jerusalem to keep the feasts was evidently quite established as one of the rules of life. The inhabitants of "the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali," and those parts which lay "beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations," described by Isaiah as "people that walked in darkness," were now among the most pious members of the commonwealth, making their pilgrimage to the chief centre of the faith at least once a year, while maintaining the comparatively modern institution of the synagogue among themselves. Jerusalem appears to us something as mediæval Rome did in the time when that great city was the undisputed head of a powerful hierarchy and the undeniable centre of Christendom—a city of ambitious ecclesiastics, of formal theologians and of priests, as much concerned with politics as with devotion. The true and humble hearts which held the spiritual part of religion dear were to be found among the peasants and fishermen of the north, bound to the centre of their religious economy by a bond so strong that it neutralised distance and the great tax upon life of one or more lingering journeys every year for the celebration of the religious mysteries. The peo-

ple that walked in darkness had already seen a great light. True piety had found refuge among them, even before the Light that lighteth every man had been revealed.

It was among these simple northern folk that God found the pure and tender maiden who was to be the instrument of His purpose. She was found in no beautiful mediæval hall, half oratory, half palace, such as are those scenes in which painters have enshrined her lowly sweetness. Was it, perhaps in a rock-hewn chamber in a humble dwelling of Nazareth, dim and cool and impervious to the blazing day: or, perhaps, as she sat and mused in a quiet moment with her pitcher at the well, that the great radiance of the angel came into the quiet, and Mary heard those strange words which have mingled in the prayers of so many generations since then: "Hail, Mary, full of grace!" It was a greeting that troubled her, so much too reverential and important as it seemed for a humble villager, as if she were a great lady. But when she heard the after-message, so much more wonderful than any that was ever given to the greatest empress in the world, her sentiments seem to have undergone a change. She was no longer troubled as by a greeting more than was her due. In the region of religion all things are possible. As soon as she became aware of what the real question was, the devout calm of her nature returned to her. Behold the handmaid of the Lord! disturbed to be approached with external honour that was not her due, but receiving in an awed yet undoubting calm, of deep reverence and obedience, the far greater and more wonderful commission communicated to her direct from God.

It is evident that the appearance of the angel in itself did not alarm or disturb the sweet composure of this village girl. Was it, perhaps, that Gabriel came with

NAZARETH.

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no effulgence of heaven about him, but in the guise of a human wayfarer, some wandering teacher or hakim, such as might pass without special notice along the paths of Galilee? And how natural was the impulse which led her when she had time to think, to arise and go "in haste" to the village in which her old cousin Elizabeth had also received a special visitation which might throw light upon this! No doubt the more she thought the more wonderful would it appear, and her heart would burn within her till the moment came when she could join some band of pilgrims or travelling family, and so make her way to that hill country of Judah on the other side of Jerusalem where the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth was. The meeting between these women is one of the most touching incidents in human history. It has been selected by the instinct of art for frequent illustration, and to women especially in their peculiar experiences must always remain full of tender interest and sympathetic feeling. Many a woman pilgrim has gone with a wistful sense of fellowship to gaze at such a picture as that of Albertinelli, the great "Visitation" at Florence, during all the ages since that wonderful meeting was painted—as many, many more have read and lingered over the still more touching narrative. But that mystery of motherhood is too internal and profound for words. It had been, we must remember, in all the previous ages of the Hebrews, the hope and inspiration of that peculiar people. The deepest deprivation of life to a woman was that she should have no children: it was almost a personal shame. "God hath taken away my reproach" is what Elizabeth herself and many another Hebrew mother had said; for was it not always possible to every one among them that in her child the Messiah, the great Prophet might be revealed? There is no appearance that Mary the daughter of David was

disturbed by any terrible sense of the miracle to be accomplished in her. The whole history of her race was miracu-

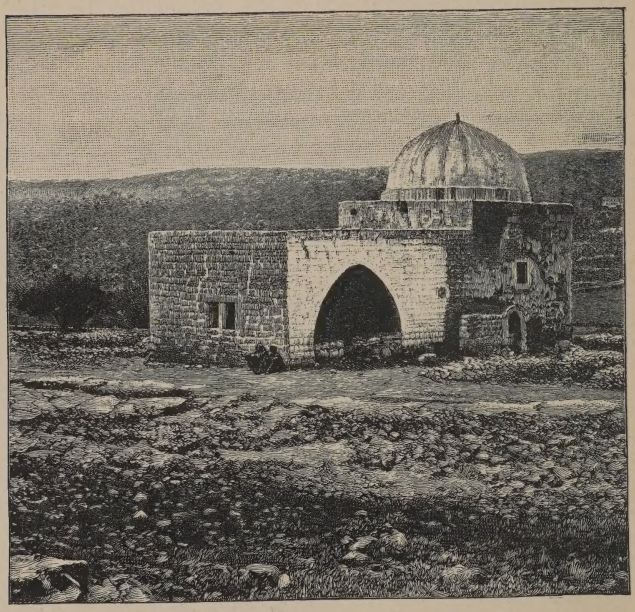
THE BETHLEHEM ROAD.

lous, and the entire age, reaching even to such tranquil depths of lowly life as those of Nazareth, was moved by the hope, the expectation of some great change and Deliv-

erer about to come. Nor is it necessary to account for her attitude and state of mind by special reference to the temper of her time. The pure-hearted and visionary girl, most delicate flower of human kind, is always more or less in the same mental condition, disturbed to be greeted as a princess, not disturbed by heavenly communication of a great mission, embarrassed by the one, finding the other even natural. Joan of Arc was not surprised to find herself a captain and leader of the armies of France. A devout and simple acquiescence in inconceivable mysteries is the inheritance of the spotless soul.

Then came the other journey in a less propitious moment, under the care of the devout and serious Joseph, a man a little saddened, as the imagination cannot but conceive him, by the strange circumstances, alarmed by the responsibility, with an ache in his heart over the sacrifice required of him, and the wonder of it all. The way to Bethlehem was long and the inn was full. Perhaps the time of the year, and certainly the circumstances, would make it impossible for that little humble group from Bethlehem to spread their mats and take their repose in the Court of the Khan, where, doubtless, their natural place would have been; and the inn with its subterranean chambers and stables below, half natural cave, half hewn and hollowed in the rock, would have probably very little accommodation above. No doubt the quiet of the underground nook, warm with the soft breath of the cattle, was grateful and in no way unusual to the young mother, not unaccustomed to such close neighbourhood with the docile creatures, and glad to be out of sight and disturbance of men. This cave-chamber has been accepted by, I think, the majority of recent investigators as the real spot of the Nativity, notwithstanding the difficulty of the fact that there is at present no entrance save by a stair; the universal tradi-

tion of Jew, Moslem, and Christian having so identified it through all the ages. There is a recess where the carpets and mats would be laid just opposite the rock-hewn manger, and the other rocky chamber in which the mild neighbours, half seen, chewing the cud in harmless



RACHEL'S TOMB, ON THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM.

quiet, would stand beyond. The manger is now replaced with one of marble, a silver star shines on the floor, the place is full of twinkling candles in the darkness, crossed by an intense blue ray of light from the rocky stair. And yet it is difficult to stand in that still place and not recognise its naturalness, the simple verification of all

descriptions, the possibilities of the scene. The dazzled shepherds would probably stumble in through some cave-doorway now filled up, seeing nothing till their eyes were accustomed to the darkness; and there would come the astonished astrologers from the far Eastern plains, who had seen his star and come to worship the Child who was born King of the Jews. I cannot think the traveller lives, even were he mere tourist, so lost to all sense of sacred things or—lesser, but still potent spell—of all respect for the long, long tradition transmitted through the dimness of the ages, who could stand otherwise than awed and silent in that holy place.

The King of the Jews! Thus hailed in the hour of his birth, thus certified to earth and heaven on the day of his death, his royal seat in one instance the manger, in the other the Cross; proclaimed by two foreign voices, one the representatives of great empires past, which had heard of the promise of his coming centuries before, the other of that still greater empire then existent, mistress of the world, which was to be transformed by his name. Too wonderful to be, too impossible to be believed, might any man say to whom history was unknown; yet not so wonderful, not so impossible to flesh and blood, as the life that lay between.

The early career of the Child born in that underground chamber is made known to us only by a vivid picture or two, full of significance. His recognition in the Temple, where he was carried, no doubt, in subdued and reverential joy, with the young mother's humble offering of the doves, and the two venerable figures of the aged saints "waiting for the consolation of Israel," who gave that greeting to the child who was "the Lord's Christ": the flight to a place of safety in order to save him from the murderous raid of Herod: the anxious return to the home in Nazareth when the danger was over: are all

told in a few words. Nazareth in its little amphitheatre of low hills, was the most tranquil home for the growing life, not like Bethlehem with the heights and hollows of Judah all spread around it, and the associations of its royal race—but a humble little town hid amid its trees, with little prospect of any kind, apart from all high roads and channels of communication with the great world. That yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem would be the great event of its village life, a wonderful incident

CONVENT OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM.

indeed breaking the homely level of every day, a thing to be looked forward to for the whole year. It was not till the son of Mary, the son of the carpenter, had attained the age of twelve, the early maturity of the East, that He joined that jubilant throng, a great crisis in the life of a boy, and marking a personal era. The first time in which the pupil, the postulant, ascended the Temple stairs and went up into the house of God, taking upon Him the privileges and duties of his birthright, must have been something like the confirmation, the first

communion of the Christian Commonwealth. We may easily imagine with what a tissue of miraculous events the growing years of the wonderful Child would have been woven had not a divine reticence and modesty of nature restrained the biographers, who use no such expedient to win our interest in the brief narratives of the gospels. What is given us there is only what is necessary to our understanding of the life and death which form the central chapter in the history of the world. In that little town of Galilee, too remote to know any of the tales of distant Bethlehem, there would be no special circumstance to draw attention to the carpenter's son. In the memory of his mother every incident was dear, but neither did she know what was to come of them: and, doubtless, the mystery of his birth was the secret of the household, a remembrance of awe and wonder, but yet in the curious composure of daily existence fallen into abeyance, not forgotten yet put aside in that familiar routine which makes every wonder seem natural. The Divine Child was silent in his slow growth into man, and probably so obedient to the laws of the humanity which he had assumed as to present no greater divinity to the eyes of the world than that of spotless childhood and developing genius in the midst of the common clay. We may partly conceive how he would take pleasure, with a novelty of sacred joy in so strange a change of position, in all the sights and sounds of nature, the harmony of creation which that veil of flesh might make him, for a time, half unconscious of having shaped and formed: and that all the humble influences of morning and evening, of the stars and dews would enter into his mind, perhaps if we may say it, with a tender surprise of changed perception from the sphere of the Maker into that of the created. But these secrets of the expanding human soul, half divine even in the merest mortal child

"Who by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended"

are too sacred in the silence of the record for other handling. And it is not till "the Lord" came "suddenly to his Temple" that the veil is for a moment withdrawn.

That Temple, the centre of Hebrew life, the symbol of national greatness, so often destroyed, so often restored, so long and mysteriously preserved through all the ages, takes a singular and altogether novel place in the experiences of the man Christ Jesus who came to abrogate it, and wind up the economy of which it formed so great a part. He seems to have sought it during the years of his ministry as the centre of all his own pursuits and occupations, but not with the feeling of those who took pleasure in the stones of Sion and to whom her very dust was dear. From the first the Temple is doomed in his eyes, a thing awaiting its destruction; and, if he gazes mournfully upon its beauty and splendour, something of the holy indignation of one to whom all the lost opportunities and divine purposes travestied and mistaken, of which it is the embodiment, are ever present, is in his look.

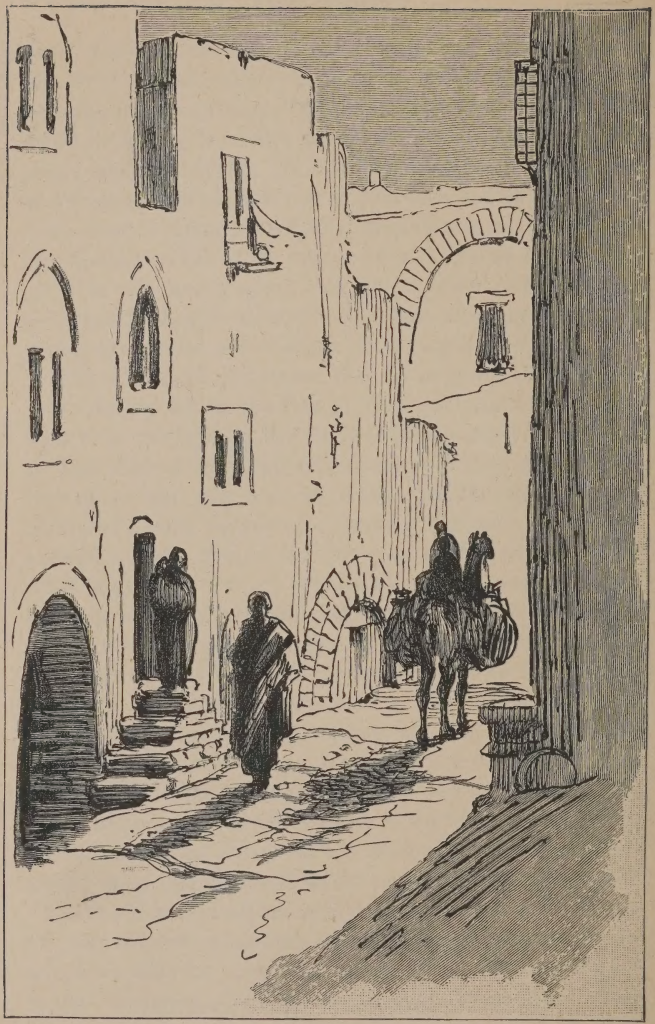
But when he came first to that historical monument, that scene of so many revelations, the first impulse of his mission was awakened in the young pilgrim. Was it a desire to hear for himself, according to his human senses, what were the things taught, and what the trifling details discussed amid all the problems of life and death, between heaven and earth, in that sanctuary which had been founded in order that God might dwell with man? There was the high priest in all his robes of office, there were the others in their courses, punctilious over the minutest particulars of service: and the scribes and doctors discussing sacred numerals and symbols, and how often a certain word appeared in the law and the prophets; and

the Pharisees taxing their mint and cumin, and calculating what should be the amount of the Corban which freed a man from the law of honour to his parents. How strangely different from those high questionings of the ways of God with man which should have occupied the thoughts of a special and chosen race! The Evangelist has not thought it necessary to tell us what questions the boy Jesus from Nazareth asked of these pundits, nor how he lay down in a chamber of the Temple favoured by some gentle priest whose heart burned within him while he listened to the wonderful Child—and rose again to pursue his inquiries from morning to morning till the third day brought back the anxious pair who had him in their charge.

How strange a scene! The puzzled doctors, stopped in their unprofitable learning, putting impossible cases to each other by one, by two, by three, like the schoolmen in later ages—pausing, lifting their eyebrows, curving a hand round a dull ear, to make out what that Child was asking, some startling penetrating question—perhaps, though of higher meaning, not unlike those which even the merest child of earth has the gift of asking, to the confusion of many subtilities. Whose was the Child? Not even a young Levite, of whom it might be hoped that his strange genius would be shaped into the service of the hierarchy in later days: but a peasant's son from Galilee, almost a Gentile though some one might know that he bore the lineage of David. When the simple pair, anxious and displeased to be brought back so many miles of their journey, appeared in the midst of those crowded courts of the Temple, in the chamber by the gate where the scribes disputed, with the throng looking in if anything of interest was going on—one can understand that the learned doctors were very glad to be rid of their youthful questioner. A young Socrates pur-

suing them to the end of their futile arguments with a *cui bono?* making them as fools to themselves by some piercing interrogatory. It was his first inspection of his Father's house, from the point of view of human intelligence, and, no doubt, his childhood afforded an excuse and explanation of that one appearance, which could not have been continued without premature revelation of his mission in the after years, when he must have come up with his family again and again, silent and dutiful, fulfilling all righteousness. The boy could do what the young man could not without betraying himself.

And who shall penetrate the mystery of these silent years during which the Son of God grew in wisdom and stature in the calm of the little Galilean city? The still greater calm of the common human folk who surrounded that place and did not see what was the wonder that encircled Jesus, the son of Joseph, is the most wonderful thought of all. His brothers or cousins James and Judas must have known every feature of his life, and, perhaps, there is something in that familiarity of boyhood which gives to the after-teachings of James, so concise and practical, an air of more complete devotion to the outside duties of the Christian life than to the contemplation of the Divine Master. But among all who walked those familiar paths, and passed him with a morning greeting, and saw him take his way when the day's work was over to the solitude of the hill, to seek the Divine society from which he was an exile—would there be none who penetrated that disguise and knew that Messias had come? "His mother kept all these sayings in her heart"—doubtful, too, towards what they were tending, pondering many times we may be sure that prophecy of his earliest infancy "a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also." What sword could come to her through that perfect son, growing daily in favour with God and man?



A STREET IN BETHLEHEM.

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Perhaps she hoped, with fond denials to herself of any power that could harm one so divine, that the prophecy might fail; perhaps looked forward, with the all-submission of her own youth, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," to the future so full of awe yet of hope, but knew nothing of all that was to be.

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" It would almost seem that he was surprised that she did not understand; as he was surprised, notwithstanding that he knew all that was in man, at the incapacity of his disciples long after to know what he could mean.

It is with hesitation and faltering that we venture to enter upon the history of this most wonderful life. It has been put before us with such divine simplicity and vividness, and has, thank heaven, so thoroughly pervaded the very atmosphere of all the modern world that it has always seemed to me a presumption to attempt to write a "life of Christ": as if such halting attempts at chronological arrangement, or local illustration, as we can give, could in any way enhance the wonder or the beauty of that history which has no parallel. The present writer, above all, would not have made any such presumptuous venture, had not the story of the sacred city demanded that its last and greatest era should not be passed over, even if from motives of the deepest reverence; for Jerusalem would have had little meaning after all in the ancient ages through which she held so pertinaciously her appointed way, recreated again and again out of death and debasement like the phœnix of the fable—but for him in whose appearance all broken meanings became clear, the everlasting Truth; as she would have little meaning now, a little town in Palestine, a trifling Eastern city, to be the object of so many pilgrimages, and so much veneration, if it were not for that

one chapter of history, which is of more importance to the human race than everything beside.

I venture, therefore, to take with reverence from the only chronicle and record of that divine life the incidents which occurred in Jerusalem, attempting little further except what is necessary for the unity of the narrative: notwithstanding that the charm is almost greater of the Lake of Galilee and those events which centre around that beautiful and tranquil spot, where more than any other on earth the pilgrim feels as if he could almost see one benignant figure walking by the shore, and meet the group of anxious attendants bearing their sick, of feeble sufferers creeping forth into the divine effulgence of that look, which carried healing wherever it shone. There, at first, were no Pharisees to make that countenance stern, no contention of scribes, no crowd gaping for a sign, no organized band of formalists and self-righteous: but only the common folk in their needs and troubles, the fathers and mothers with their children, the cry to him on all sides for help and succour, the petitions of love. Pious commentators in modern days have bidden us only to ask for spiritual gifts, to reckon upon no answer to prayer in which personal advantage is involved; but thank God it was not so in those old days in Galilee, where every parent brough his sick child, and the women importuned him if he did not seem to hear, and all that were in trouble sought his feet, plucked at his robe, never paused to think that it was for their advantage to get well, and for their happiness to have their children restored to them. Nor did he, the Lord and Giver of life. To my own mind there is nothing so futile in this miraculous earth as the discussion of miracles which were a natural radiation from the very touch upon mortal soil of a being transcendent in power and goodness. He is a far greater

miracle than anything he did. Let it be shown how such a one came into being, alone, supreme, unequalled, not only in all history, but in all poetry and the loftiest imagination of man, which has never produced anything that can be placed near him—any more than art has ever produced anything beyond the divine suggestion of an infant, which is worthy in the most remote degree to bear his name. Let this be explained to us, we say in the first place, and then we may be at leisure to examine into that mystery of the swine which seems so much more congenial to some inquirers. No learning is necessary to know the premisses of the inquiry. It seems the first question to settle, the very head and front of all investigation.

Jesus of Nazareth, as was the custom of the time and race, waited until he had attained the full maturity of manhood before beginning his work. It was the age at which the priests assumed their office, an age in which it might be supposed, according to the early development of the East, that the period of youth had passed and that of full manhood and competence to undertake the gravest responsibilities had arrived. John the Baptist, whose birth preceded that of his Lord only by a few months, had followed the same rule, and thus appeared out of the wilderness to fulfil his office at a corresponding age, the work of the forerunner being of short duration though of the most striking and indeed startling kind. The conjunction of these two figures, the wistful and expectant prophet, not knowing from which side to expect the appearance of the Lord, looking eagerly upon every new neophyte to see if perhaps this was he, and the calm sublime of him who came to fulfil all righteousness, is one of the most wonderful of Gospel pictures. "I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water said to me"—the representative of all the prophets, the

second Elias, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, he who had been a hermit living in solitary places out of the way of men, had, no doubt, forgotten if in his desert life he ever knew, the aspect of his young kinsman—until the Divine sign was given which pointed him out as the Lamb of God. After the revelation had been made, and his human life thus consecrated to his mission, Jesus returned to his natural home; or rather it would be better to say, to the shores of the Lake of Galilee which was a day's journey from Nazareth, but with which he had probably some connection as so much of his time was spent there. His mother, perceiving that his life was now to be shaped on other lines, possibly as the time went on abandoned her household and followed him there in order to care for the wants of external necessity; or still more probably, her husband being dead, was naturally devoted to the care of her son and transferred herself to the place that suited him best. At the present moment, however, she was probably still resident in Nazareth, and he travelling towards that lowly dwelling-place when he paused at the village of Cana to attend the marriage feast. "Both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage," which was probably an important event in the countryside, though the bridegroom was no wealthy inhabitant, but only a kindly connection or neighbour of the same humble position as his guests.

Perhaps it was to give his attendance at this feast, the wedding of some one who had been a companion of his childhood, that Jesus paused on his way from the baptism in Jordan to his own home. Recent researches of the Palestine Exploration officers, most interesting of all investigations into the past, have discovered a spot on Jordan still bearing the name of Abarah, so like the Bathabara of the narrative that it makes the transition from the Baptism to the Lake of Galilee the easiest pos-

sible, instead of a long journey as has been supposed, from the scene near Jericho long identified with this event. Perhaps after their first parting, and his assumption of his office, it was at Cana that the Virgin met her son, her heart full of anxiety and insecurity, seeing that a great change had occurred, wistful, not knowing yet what it was. She must have been aware of this change, or she would not have given that humble hint about the wine. What did she know? Had there been already some strange blessing in the house in Nazareth upon all that his sacred hand touched, though, perhaps, no one had noticed except the ever watchful eyes which followed him wherever he went, never intermitting that tender vigilance, still and always eager to know what the secret of his birth and of himself, so different from any other, could mean? Was she already aware in an awe of unassured faith, ever wondering, of some mysterious supply, some strange waxing of the needed stores at home? And it is strange to note that he did not consent in words, did not reply as he did to the many poor supplicants that came after, with divine courtesy and patience; but almost we may imagine in his knowledge of the dangers of the future, and the position of goddess which was to be forced upon that humble woman, with a little sternness forbidding her interference. And there is no appearance that he did it as any proof or sign of his own power, but rather out of pure kindness to the poor cousin whose popularity must have been so much greater than his wealth, who had asked everybody, but could only supply a little for their entertainment. Mary must have had some authority as of a relation or she could not have bidden the servants to obey him. But he made no mystic sign, said no word, awaited no thanks. The mother saw, whose anxious eyes were never long absent from him, and the disciples saw who had followed him,

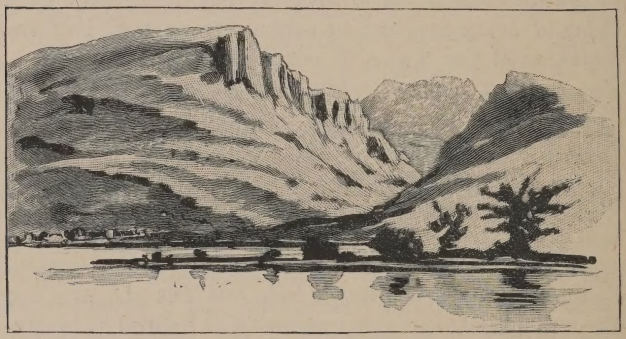
by some attraction they scarcely understood, who watched eagerly all his movements, to justify to themselves the step they had taken. There is no appearance that except by those two the miracle called for anything more than a little wonder, as to where the astonished bridegroom could have got it, that marvellous wine.

There has been little said, I think, among the many discussions of the supernatural, of the entire naturalness of these miracles. The initiatory miracle of all is, of course, the Person by whom they are performed; and if it can be proved that there have been others like him in this world, and that the records of history contain another who, according to the common judgment of humanity, may be placed by his side or near him, then I have no doubt the lesser argument might come in: but granted the far greater miracle of the two, the extreme naturalness of the others is, I think, to a simple mind, the most wonderful thing about them. We are disposed nowadays to smile at them as proofs, feeling that our Lord is his own transcendent proof and that in his great presence it is a kind of well-meant and pious blasphemy to produce any testimonials as it were to his character. The Christian of the nineteenth century would probably be easier in his mind if the miracles were put out of the question, being a man of his time, as the writers who recorded them were men of their time and loved every detail of every prodigy. But even that sentiment it appears to me is wrong, and calculated to take away something from the benignity of that Friend who was what no other man or friend has ever been. How could he hold his hand being what he was? how refuse what those helpless neighbours wanted, whether wine for their feast or, still more, healing for their sick? Healing could not but ray out of him as he moved, as tenderness did, and love, and thought of everything great

and small that appealed to his help. And it was such a little time in which that was possible, in which the power of God and the visible acts of man were to be conjoined! I have thought often that when "Jesus wept" at the grave of Lazarus, those tears were called forth not by the thought of him who lay there in his cave ready to rise, but of the many, many myriads of graves at which women must fling themselves unsuccoured, and endure that from which Mary and Martha were set free. We must all recognise, and how much more he, that the laws of Nature must go on in general, that death must be a thing of every day, and mourning the garb of half the world, until the course of our dispensation is fulfilled. But for that moment, while he was there, whose deep sense of that great mystery brought tears to his eyes even in the act of greatest joy! The alms of a rich man to the poor, whether given with the unreflecting liberality of ancient time or with the more cautious enthusiasm of charity which prevails now, were not more natural, not more simple than these works of wonder—wonder to those who crowded about him, and felt and saw, but the natural outcome of his presence, as natural as breathing, as simple as the day.

It was probably the yearly period at which all Galilee was being moved to go up to the feast when that marriage took place, and Mary of Nazareth might have preceded her party but a few days for the wedding, and joined the gathering troup as they went by, with her son, and those young men of the country who had attached themselves to him and who followed wherever he went. Jesus had, no doubt, gone up many times to Jerusalem in the interval between his appearance there as a boy and his present journey, silent, fulfilling all righteousness, looking with patience upon the defilements of the Temple, his time being not yet come. And it is possible enough that the

interest awakened by that boyish apparition may have faded away in the quiet of the years as the bystanders perceived that the precocious boy was going no farther, but had sunk into the stillness of life as so many promising talents do. It might already be thought by some with disappointment that they hoped it was to have been he who should have redeemed Israel. This might probably cause still a certain curiosity about his presence, a lingering desire to know whether after all the prophecy



LAKE OF GALILEE: THE HORNS OF HATTIN, ON WHICH THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT WAS PREACHED, IN THE DISTANCE.

of old Simeon was to mean anything, among the devout frequenters of the Temple. But thirty years is a long time, and so, indeed, is the eighteen which had elapsed without any incident, since that Galilean boy had stood among the scribes and asked them questions. He had been seen going and coming since like the others, paying his tithe, making his offering: as now he came, but with some rousing of popular curiosity, some rumour of new wonders, and that band behind, closely following him, breathlessly watching everything he did.

It is very difficult to determine whether Jesus made that scourge of small cords the first time he came to the Temple after he had taken his ministry upon him, as well as on a later occasion: or whether St. John's account has got completely out of chronology as other incidents are in that and the other gospels, from the fragmentary character of the record. But it is evident that whether he assailed the money-changers and sacrifice-merchants upon that first occasion or not he greatly roused the curiosity and interest of the people. On "the feast day" —no doubt that which is described on other occasions as "the great day of the feast"—when the sacrifices had been accomplished, and the crowd of joyful pilgrims and inhabitants had spread themselves over all the courts of the Temple in enjoyment of the holiday, the young prophet from the north would seem to have been the centre of wonder. Saying little as yet, scarcely coming out of the character of observer and spectator, he yet could not withhold his divine hand from bestowing those alms of healing and miracle which at last, after the long and quiet probation of his youth, he had begun to dispense so liberally. "Many believed in his name when they saw the miracles he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." This is one of St. John's pregnant sayings full of the inner knowledge which came to him by long pondering upon the recollections of that sacred period. It was not according to the designs of Providence that He should be forced into notoriety, that the end of the great tragedy should be hastened, as might have been had all the passions of an urban crowd been aroused, so different from the enthusiasm more slowly growing, and less impassioned of the simpler peasants. And the crowd at Jerusalem was essentially fanatic.

The city lived by its sacred character, and the sale of the sacrifices must have been like the sale of indulgences in mediæval Rome. It was the centre of religious agitations also, and there was nothing the population loved so much as controversy and the long-drawn quibbles about the law, and questions of form and ceremonial. Jesus of Nazareth had many things yet to do before He came to the concluding scene of all, and this is a strong argument against the occurrence of a preliminary driving out of the traffickers in the Temple which would have made a commotion in the city, such as he does not seem to have desired so early in his career.[1]

We may be allowed in all reverence to imagine the manner of this first public visit to Jerusalem. If the full revelation of his own mission had only been opened out to his manhood after the Baptism, as seems to be indicated, the previous glimpses and intuitions of divinity rising at once into full manifestation: our Lord must now have begun to regard the Temple and the city which had hitherto been to him the "Father's House"—in which he had fulfilled all the commanded rites, and performed the duties incumbent upon all pious Hebrews—in a different aspect. This wonderful Temple, the pride of the nation, was henceforward a thing about to dissolve and melt away. It was to be destroyed which had cost

[1] I may be permitted to add that in the attempts at chronological arrangement that follow, I have endeavoured to place myself in the position of one who reads that narrative for the first time, and places the different incidents in what seems to him a natural succession: not only with no authority but with no desire to claim any knowledge beyond that of a reader accustomed to literary criticism, and to note the sequence of natural events. I ask the indulgence of any Biblical critic who may read the book on this ground alone. I have not attempted to reconcile my impressions with those of any authoritative teaching. They are those of a reader, not of a teacher: sometimes, perhaps, in the audacity of ignorance over bold: but without any pretension except to the simplest individual apprehensions of facts which are open to all.

so many years in building: but in three days another temple, the temple of his body, would be raised up; the temporal was about to give way to the spiritual. All that elaborate system of types, of substitutions, of sacrifice, the ransom by blood that had to be paid for every Israelite, was coming to an end. The temple of his body could only be builded by the preliminaries of his death. As he went musing, silent, about those echoing courts with the hum of many voices round him, he must have already seen all the stranger, darker scenes that were so soon to be. It was natural that he should say little in that realisation of everything that was to follow, the winding up of the dispensation that looked so firmly established, the grimness of its death-struggle, the obstinacy of its self-destruction: with, in the meantime against that background of blood and fire, the dread scene of his own abandonment at once by God and man, the loneliness of the Cross, the struggle of the Agony.

All this must have appeared to him as he moved about, followed ever by the impetuous Peter, who would not keep silent, by John intent upon his every look, and the strong, untutored fisher, Andrew, like some Scotch salt-water sea-dog in London, wondering with a half disapproval, half worship, over the splendours of the Temple. One wonders if it may not have been now, and not at a later period, that the disciples, probably "those of Jerusalem," who had been attracted by the sight of his unrecorded miracles, the droppings from him of divine tenderness as he walked, "came to him for to show him the buildings of the Temple." Probably these men were privileged persons, able to take the little band of strangers from Galilee into places not always open, perhaps Nicodemus among them, whom he had so sorely bewildered by that strange statement about the second birth, and who would listen eagerly to hear

the Master's comment on this pride of the Jewish heart. And what strange words were those which came from the young Rabbi's lips? "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." What an incredible, impossible thing to say! Herod's Temple stood in all its splendour before them, with its magnificent cloister, its beautiful gate, all the wonderful architecture of it, strong as the rock on which it stood —the courts full both of Jews and proselytes, every entry to the enclosure, every gate, filled with a moving, bright-coloured crowd. Perhaps the cicerones and eager guides scarcely heard this sentence in the eagerness of their explanations, and it was not till the little band of closest friends went out to the Mount of Olives, and sat there round him, gazing upon the shining walls where Jerusalem lay fair in the sun, that he explained to them what he meant. His human heart was sore for that dreadful necessity. Far more than of what he was himself to suffer did he think of this, returning to it with an anguish of lamentation again and again. O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! to which every heart had turned, of whom the captives in Babylon prayed that their right hand might forget its cunning if ever they forgot her, their chief joy—and which that little band of pilgrims had approached, singing as they paced along the lingering ways, by Jordan and Jericho, from their lake side, that Sion was the joy of the whole earth, and that they were glad when it was said to them: "Let us go up into the house of the Lord." With what awe would they hear, looking over the valley at those white pinnacles and the great walls dazzling in the sunshine! though they probably soon forgot that impression with the unconscious incredulity of nature, and felt that what was before them must still continue to be, indefinitely, notwithstanding that the sentence was so true.

It would appear from the narrative of St. John that Jesus and his disciples lingered in Judea for some time after their first Passover, and that these disciples, probably eager to get to work at that occupation promised them as fishers of men, began to baptize in imitation of John, two of them having been the companions of John, before they were drawn, partly by his advice, partly by the mysterious attraction of our Lord's personality, to follow him. This is the only indication we have that the methods of John the Baptist were ever used during the ministry of Jesus; and it would seem that he left the place where this was done, possibly the traditionary spot near the Jordan, which is still pointed out, to avoid any appearance of interference with John, whose mission had not yet been brought to an end. "When the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), he left Judea."

It is at this point that the Evangelist places the interview with the woman of Samaria. Pursuing their way after the slow method of those times—still the method of any band of villagers and fishermen returning from Jerusalem to Galilee—the travellers went through Samaria; and Jesus, weary with the journey, sat down upon the wall which surrounded Jacob's well, in the height of the afternoon, when shade and quiet is specially welcome. It was not an hour when the chattering throng of girls, with their bright kerchiefs on their heads, would come to the fountain: for it was, no doubt, already summer, and nobody would be about who could help it, in the heat of the day. But the cool of the little building over the well, the grateful damp of the watery place, would be comfortable to the wayfarer, and there, no doubt, it was decided to make their halt, while the others went into the town to buy something for their

meal. Thus it was that when the "woman of Samaria," a woman whom the other women avoided, whom the girls would not be permitted to speak to, came out at an unlikely time with her pitcher, she found that Pilgrim seated there. The usual stream of pilgrims must have all passed by some time before, returning to their homes: so that the country had fallen back into the ordinary quiet in which a passer-by was something to wonder at. She had expected, no doubt, the usual scorn of the Jew, the drawing away of mantle and robe, lest any contact with her very unpolemical figure should sully the orthodoxy of the Judean. But the aspect of this traveller was not as that of other men. He asked her, to her great astonishment, to let him drink from her pitcher, and after he had received that simple favour sat still and talked with her as none had ever done before; neither because she was a Samaritan, nor because she was a shamed and sullied woman, did this traveller despise her. She was, probably, no ordinary woman, or she would not have responded to him as she did, or understood as she seems to have done. When the disciples came back their attitude was a very curious one. They were still, we may believe, so little familiar with their Master, having so recently thrown in their lot with him, that something of timidity mingled with the awe which they never ceased to feel: they did not dare to interfere in this strange dialogue which was going on, or to ask "Why talkest thou with her?" Neither did they venture to inquire afterwards what had been the cause of the conversation. When she went away they laid their little supply before him and begged him to eat. But again, when he replied, "I have meat to eat ye know not of," the confusion of their surprise was so great that they knew not what to say. Had any one brought the Master food while they were absent? What had happened to

restore him from his weariness? Again and again this wistful wonder appears in the narrative. Even at the end, after they have walked in his steps and listened to his words for the three years of his public career, the apostles still watch his looks to discover what he means, with the same anxious bewilderment of spirit. And when he bade them lift up their eyes and behold the fields which were already white to the harvest, they did so, no doubt, wondering, looking dumbly at the waving corn, slow to understand that these Samaritans, who were by this time coming out from the town, full of curiosity to see him who had told their neighbour all that ever she did—were the harvest which he meant.

It is not till another year that we find Jesus again in Jerusalem, and once more the record is that of St. John. It is at "a feast" not specified, which would make it appear that it was not the Passover. Jesus had entered upon the wandering life of a prophet and teacher, and was no longer bound by the homely routine of living which kept the one great feast of the year, the common Sacrament of the Jewish faith, but had not the means of going to all. To him it was now desirable that he should carry his message not only among the quiet ways of Galilee, but wherever the people were gathered together: and his journeys to Jerusalem were probably many. It might be as he was entering the city that he passed through the sheep gate at the north-eastern corner of the Temple enclosure, the gate by which the "lambs for the slaughter," the sheep of the daily sacrifice, were brought in, a touching coincidence. Near to that spot lay the pool, supplied by what is now called the fountain of the Virgin in the vale of the Kedron, a bubbling intermittent spring, mineral water as is now explained, a pool in which healing was asserted to be found. It is identified by tradition with the Birket Israel, a deep pool much choked

up by rubbish, which lies close under the north-east angle of the Temple wall; but I believe that another situation has been suggested, near the present Church of St. Anne, by recent explorations.

A line of arched cloisters, a little colonnade, supported on five sets of pillars, the "five porches" of our translation, was on the bank, with steps descending to the water —a beautiful feature of Eastern architecture, very usual and especially necessary where so much ablution is used. Underneath the shade of these arches lay the sick folk who were waiting for the "troubling of the water," the effervescence and influx, as now explained, of the spring. Jesus and his followers passing by, strangers arriving from Bethany or some other of the villages near, or taking the quiet walk of a Sabbath day's journey to that favourite olive garden on the other side of the brook, which was so good a place of repose after the crowds of the city, ascended into the grateful shade and coolness of the little arcade. And there in the stillness of the Sabbath, no cure to be hoped for on that day, lay the poor man on his carpet, who had spent so great a part of his life awaiting the miracle. It is impossible not to feel that he was not a very worthy object of charity as we say, seeing that one of the earliest uses of his restored strength was to denounce his deliverer to the enemy. But the eye of the Lord fell upon him as he lay in his abandonment of misery. He might be the only sick man there, the others having been carried home who had friends, lest they should be tempted to shuffle down into the water and get themselves healed on the Sabbath day. But thirty-eight years lying there, waiting, with no one to help him, shows a man sadly without friends, perhaps an altogether destitute person —and the Divine pity is as the rain which falls upon the just and unjust. "Rise, take up thy bed and walk," said the Saviour. The miracle had come to him who

was unable to go to it, even so far as the descent of these steps.

This would seem to have been the beginning of the great Sabbath controversy, if we may use the words. The man as he hurried away with his roll of rugs, was caught at once by the spiritual police that abounded on every side. They might according to the rigour of the law have stoned him for this transgression: though it does not seem that any such tragical intention was ever in their thoughts; but they caught and spoke to him roughly, reminding him what day it was, and that it was unlawful to go into the town, as he probably was doing, with that large bundle. A Scotch policeman would have done much the same thing forty or fifty years ago. Jesus had passed on his way, threading through the busy crowds in the gate, avoiding further question, probably for that prevailing reason that his time was not yet: and the man did not know who the beneficent visitor was who had bidden him to arise and go. When he met at a later date his deliverer in the Temple, Jesus admonished him as he never did on any other occasion of the kind: "Sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee." And the ungrateful cripple used his recovered limbs to hurry forth and tell the religious persecutors who it was who had cured him, *i.e.* made him guilty of the sin of carrying his bed on the Sabbath day.

The grave yet gentle dignity of our Lord's warning is very remarkable. It would be hard to say whether it was the spontaneousness of his tender charity which had flowed forth without recollection, as we might say, of the Sabbath; or whether it was by intention that he thus opened the subject. There had been an exemption from the severe law of the Sabbath in its earliest institution, for works of necessity and mercy; but the Jew formalists had improved upon the law, knowing no bet-

ter spiritual way than to bind these ceremonial restrictions tighter, making of it, as has been already said, a god in the place of their old idols whom they had outgrown. Most likely the apostles themselves were startled at the breach of the rigid bond which was one of the most marked points of the Jewish economy; but here there was no explanation given as of the parables that puzzled them, no announcement of a change of plan. It is curious to remark, in passing, that there was evidently no objection on the part of the Jews to the dinner-parties and entertainments of the Sabbath. These were permitted: it was the healing that was objected to. The modern champions of the Sabbatic law act in a contrary sense, and would, no doubt, permit the healing were it possible, but not the feasts.

It would seem to have been on this occasion that Jesus for the first time began to teach in Jerusalem. And it is remarkable to note at once the changed tone of his discourse. He speaks not as he spoke in Galilee, instituting a new economy of life, that enlarged and altered code of the Gospel, the supreme rule for the thoughts and the heart, which flowed from him, distilling like the dew, in the early dawn of his ministry, a new revelation, full of tenderness towards men, if also of the unfailing conflict between good and evil, the choice betwixt God and mammon. But the Jews of Jerusalem were a very different kind of audience. In those courts of the Temple, where he now became a familiar figure, the eager crowd which surrounded him was essentially a polemical crowd, defenders and champions of their faith. Foremost among them would be the keen and subtle faces of the doctors, ever ready to draw him into controversy, the scribes with their trained and critical wits, the scornful Pharisees with their broad phylacteries. The record at once becomes that of a prolonged argu-

ment, controversy rather than teaching. No room nor possibility here for any Sermon on the Mount, no tender lingering of parable and similitude, of the images drawn from that smiling nature around, the sower sowing in the field, the white tower shining on the hill. To Nicodemus he had already abandoned that milder ground, and spoken of a change so fundamental that it was not too much to say, "Ye must be born again"; and when he takes his seat in those high places of Jerusalem, it is without hesitation or delay to put forth his own great claim, and assert his mission in the most uncompromising tones, while the highest intelligences of Israel stood listening round, eager to argue, to object, to prove him wrong. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" are almost the first words that reach our ears from that eminence and centre of Israel: and it is very clear that the Jews put no figurative interpretation upon them. It did not occur to them, as it does to modern interpreters, that Jesus spoke as any devout man might do who felt God to be his Father. They charged him immediately with blasphemy, because he said "that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Thus at once the great controversy was opened, with no compromise on either side. He was not shocked at the imputation of that blasphemy as a good man without any divine claim would be. Such a one would not have wasted a word on any other subject till he had cleared himself from this. But our Lord accepts and proceeds to demonstrate the truth of his claim.

In the great confusion of the chronology it is difficult to assign to each incident and still more to each discourse its right place. The address which follows the healing of the impotent man in the record of John (John v. 19 to the end), and which would seem to be the first address given in Jerusalem, will probably appear to the

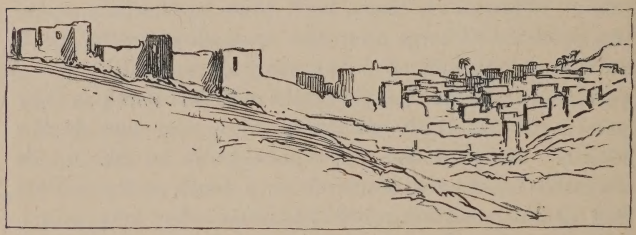
natural student from internal evidence rather to have followed such an event as that of the raising of Lazarus. "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." What could be more appropriate than this had it been said after the miracle of Bethany? It is rash for an ignorant person, unacquainted even with the laws of Scripture criticism and taking the history of the gospels like any other old and irregularly constructed history, to venture upon a suggestion, but it seems to me that in a natural sense the address which is given in the seventh chapter of St. John (vii. 16, 24), as delivered on a later occasion, would be more appropriate if it were substituted here for the wonderful discourse which I have had the boldness to say appears rather to have followed such a miracle as that of the raising of Lazarus. When our Lord says "I have done one work and ye all marvel," his words seem to bear a natural reference to something just performed of which all minds were full, rather than to an incident which, though unique in their experience and of the highest popular interest, had happened several months before. It is true that it was wonderful enough to have recurred to every one upon his next appearance, and to have raised again the former commotion: yet the words would be still more appropriate if it had just occurred and was the marvel of the moment in all men's minds. "Why are ye angry at me because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?" he asks, that question evidently being uppermost in the minds of his hearers. It might, no doubt, have come back to them, in the great and sudden popular excitement which blazed up on the sudden reappearance in the Temple of the great Sabbath-breaker, he

who had so boldly set the law at defiance. I do not know enough of Biblical criticism to be aware whether such a suggestion has ever been made before. I venture upon it solely from a literary and natural point of view. It looks like a speech delivered on the moment, while still nobody was able to forget that extraordinary act, and the fact almost more extraordinary to the common people, and thrust into greater importance still by the rulers, that he had done this, a thing forbidden on the Sabbath day.

The scene of this conversation and address was, no doubt, one of those chambers in the Temple to which so many references are made, built close to the gate, opening probably by large archways or windows to the court, so that the throng of worshippers or spectators going and coming to the Temple might stop and listen as they passed, to the argument going on in the cool depths within. Many of the discussions given in St. John's narrative must have occurred so, a band of the priests and literati, or dark-robed Pharisees who were prominent in the society of Jerusalem—that society which centred in the Temple—sitting about the prophet of Galilee whom they would fain have condemned but could not: asking him now one, now another artful question framed to catch him in his talk, fixing upon him the keen attention of controversy, continually baffled and silenced, sometimes touched to the heart like him who acknowledged in full hearing of his fellows, that to love God above all, and one's neighbour as one's self, was indeed the whole law and the prophets in one. In the absence of these pundits, the commoner crowd would but flock round the more, throwing in the comment of ignorance: "who goeth about to kill thee?" while the dark group of humble Galileans stood behind, their homely sunburnt faces gradually growing refined and

expressive with all they were hearing and seeing, the company in which they spent their lives: while outside of all the multitude came and went, sometimes gathering in a mass when the voices dropped, and his alone, penetrating yet soft, would come forth upon the air thrilling all hearts, though with an argument not addressed to the crowd.

After this scene in which so great and startling a departure had been made from the formal traditions of the Jews, strained and amplified as they were by the work of many generations of ritualists upon the original



TIBERIAS: LAKE OF GALILEE.

teachings of the law, our Lord departed from Jerusalem as the other pilgrims would do and returned to Galilee. It is believed that the commotion roused by this visit was so great that he did not go up to the next Passover, but continued his work upon the shores of his favourite lake, and among the villages and towns of Galilee, specially in the great city of Capernaum, and the district about. The entire district of northern Palestine, indeed, from the Mediterranean to the great inland lake, which was of more importance to that country than the sea, was familiar with his footsteps; his centre of movement being always that lake, to the banks of which his home would seem to have been transferred after the

beginning of his ministry. But when the second year had come round again to the Feast of Tabernacles he would seem to have been taunted with his reluctance to go to Jerusalem. "His brethren," relations incapable, as relations so often are, of seeing the greatness of One whose strange superiority it was a sort of humiliation to acknowledge, urged him to show himself to the world. "For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly." The centre of all things was Jerusalem, and no revolution such as that which all in Galilee must now have been aware this great Prophet, whom they followed with so much wonder, intended to accomplish—could be carried out elsewhere than in the capital of the race. The disciples never seem to have urged or even suggested any such step, for they had seen the passions roused by his teaching, the fierce opposition of scribe and Pharisee. It was not in the purpose of our Lord, however, to go up again with that cheerful band, gathering as they went with a new group from every village, beguiling the way with song and story, which in his earlier youth he had accompanied so often "to keep the feast." But when the great caravan had departed in the gay excitement of its periodical holiday, and with all the commotion of the genial expedition, Jesus and his followers took their way alone to Jerusalem. No doubt he was so well known by this time and caused so much excitement wherever he went, that it would be expedient to make the journey "not openly, but as it were in secret" that he might not be stopped by the crowds that would gather wherever his name was heard.

In the meantime he had been looked for among the pilgrims in every band that arrived from the north, curious eyes, no doubt, scanning every group, and those of Jerusalem asking each other "Where is he?" as they

met in the courts of the Temple, in the rejoicings of the feasts, or out in those green arbours which were planted on the housetops and in the open spaces of the streets, watching the strangers go by and greeting their friends from the country. "Where is he?" "Think you, will he come up to the feast?" "For there was much murmuring among the people concerning him;" and many discussions as to his character and claims among those groups in the leafy tents. "Some said he is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews." The Jews here mentioned, as in all the accounts of the subsequent story, mean, as is plain, those described in the Old Testament as "rulers" or "princes," at this time the Sanhedrim, the national government, a body made up of the chief priests, the scribes, or interpreters of the law, lawyers, or disputers on that all-prevailing subject, and members of that strictest sect of formalists, called Pharisees. The members of this governing body were not all pious, though their very livelihood depended upon the piety of the people. They contained within themselves the lively scepticism of the cynic as well as the obstinate formalism of bigotry: those who held all religion lightly and believed neither in angel nor spirit: and those who were bent on binding all human life in the bondage of a detailed and exacting system to which they added the glosses of their own interpretation, narrowing its divinity day by day. And they, too, no doubt, looked with all the heat and eagerness of the polemic for the appearance of that new and strange Teacher whom some of them had already met in the Temple, and some seen and questioned in Galilee: and of whom so many additional rumours of mysterious teachings and still more mysterious deeds had been heard. The writer of the gospel did not know nor does he suggest what was pass-

ing among that learned circle, the superior classes of the city. He knew the "murmurings" of the people, the questions from one to another, but not how they would ask each other at the meetings of the Sanhedrim "Will he come?"

These expectations must have partially died away, with, perhaps, a relieved conviction on the part of the rulers that he would not again confront them in their own region of the Temple with questions which no one could answer, with replies which reduced the questioner to confusion, when Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of the feast. The popular discussion which had dropped for the moment instantly arose upon the reappearance of our Lord in all the force of the most graphic narrative. We seem to hear the murmur and rustle, the confusion of many questions to which there are no answers. It is full of nature and life and the vacillations of the popular mind. Those who had whispered about among themselves "Where is he? Will he come?" and said, some that he was a good man, some that he was a deceiver, now turned upon each other with another question: "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him." Among these murmurs were still bolder voices. "Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" and others in the crowd who added objections. "We know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." Was this, one wonders, from some envious pilgrim of Galilee, and did our Lord catch the familiar accent as he passed through the crowd, and make it the subject of his address to them? Anyhow, whether he caught the flying word in this way, or spoke out of the intuition in his mind and knowledge of all thoughts, this was the theme on which he did speak, briefly as would appear amid the turmoil and movement of

the crowd. "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am," he cries, "in the Temple as he taught," raising his voice one cannot but feel to still the rising murmur. "And I am not come of myself, but he that hath sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me." The crowd seethed and raged around moved by conflicting impulses while he stood calm having thus proclaimed his high commission so that all could hear, dominating the tumult. "They sought to take him," those of Jerusalem who were on the side of the authorities—"but no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come." There is, indeed, through every line a sense at once of bewilderment and of awe, the surging of the throng, the opinions as diverse as were the elements in that mingled multitude, the bigots with their large phylacteries, the country folk come up for their holiday, the more serious pilgrims not knowing what to think. "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man doth?" rises another murmur in the crowd. We are told of no immediate miracle done in Jerusalem, but the Galileans must have brought a hundred tales of wonder, and even here there may have been wonders untold, blessings that radiated from him as he moved, and which penetrated the crowd with a sense of the presence of One in the midst of them who was not as any other teacher had ever been. These wonderings and questionings must have risen into all the force of a popular commotion towards the end of the day while the crowd was dispersing, repeating to each other those sayings which they could not understand. What did that prophet mean when he said "Yet a little while am I with you. Ye shall seek me and shall not find me." "Whither will he go?" they asked among themselves; "will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles?" That, too, would be part

of Messiah's mission, to gather back the lost tribes of Israel, to bring back the scattered race and make it one. "What manner of saying is this that he said?" they asked each other as they poured down across the bridge and by the great stairs as the evening was falling, towards their homes.

The members of the governing party heard these murmurs with dismay. The Sanhedrim must have collected, as many of them as were within reach, in the council-chamber, reporting with anxious faces what one and another had heard. The excitement of the people could not be ignored. The multitude must have collected from every side to that one central point where Jesus stood, other teachings, even the office of the evening sacrifice, neglected in their eagerness, to hear what he was saying, to see him, to behold, perhaps, some miracle such as they had heard of, or seen on former occasions. The council of the priests and Pharisees were filled with rage and terror, perhaps not wholly irreligious or unpatriotic. An uproar among the people was of all things the most undesirable at such a moment; for if these tolerated festivities and rites became in any way a danger to the public peace, there was always a fear behind—an excellent weapon for the hostile rulers, a continual scare for the wavering—that the Romans might come and take away their name and people. So at the present day, could we imagine the appearance of a great prophet to stir into a flame of new life the meek and pensioned Jews of Jerusalem, would the Turks do, if permitted, not unwilling to have such a pretext. The end of the conclave was that officers were appointed to secure the person of the Teacher on the next day; and then no doubt, the rulers, too, separated, with anxiety indeed, yet with satisfaction, all but Nicodemus who must have watched the progress of the man who had conveyed so

strange a new knowledge to his mind, with continually increasing interest and wonder though without any further act as yet.

Next day we may suppose, at least a day following closely after, the last day, the great day of the feast, the people must have assembled early in the Temple courts, full of the same excitement and curiosity. We are told that it was part of the ceremonial used at the morning sacrifice to pour out libations of water brought from Siloam for that purpose, while the accompanying choirs sang an anthem in the words of the prophet Isaiah. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The procession which brought in that water from the cold and fresh pool, in the midst of the October heat and overwhelming sunshine: the golden vessels of the Temple in which it was conveyed blazing in the morning light, and the music rising and falling as the water-bearers came up the slopes of Moriah towards the Temple gates: must have been one of the most striking and picturesque features of the great ceremonial, and one which would always attract the crowd. It is suggested that it was, perhaps, this ceremony which brought an image he had before employed to the lips of our Lord as he began the teachings of the second day. He "stood" and cried, perhaps as the anthem ended, as the sparkling flow of the water stopped, which he had been contemplating like the crowd, pouring out like light itself on the shining stones: "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink." Were there, perhaps, eager pilgrims who put forth a hollowed hand to catch some drops of that sparkling water as it flowed, with a sense that it was half sacramental, a holy thing? It is only what was, no doubt, the beginning and the ending of this discourse which has been preserved for us, as seems the case in all the addresses of this animated and busy time;

but we know that he had already made use of that image of the living water, so doubly full of meaning in the burning East, on various occasions; and the effect at this moment would appear to have been very great, insomuch that "the people when they heard this saying" said "of a truth this is the Prophet," while others said "This is the Christ."

Nothing can be more vivid than these descriptions of the crowd in the courts of the Temple which seem to have occupied so much of the Evangelist's attention at so critical a moment. Keenly observant of every change in the throng of upturned faces, and every movement and question among them, must these spectators have been who stood behind their Lord, making what personal barrier of defence they could for him amid the surrounding pressure, and less regardful, probably, for the moment of what he said—for could not they ask him when they gathered about him in the evening, under the olive-trees in the quiet of the garden?—than of the changes of the crowd, the looks of conviction or of menace, the wave of feeling that passed over them, like a breeze over the corn. These lookers-on could not disguise from themselves that his very life might be in danger should some sudden impulse of bigotry seize upon the Jews, who must have formed a great part of the crowd: or that any tumult and public uproar would re-act upon him whom the rulers would certainly believe to have provoked it. Perhaps, who can tell, they thought him rash to be so open, to place his own supreme position before that multitude so clearly, instead of confining himself to the sublime moral instruction, the wonderful spiritual expositions of all things in heaven and earth to which he had given utterance in Galilee. Why now, they might ask, where he was so much less secure, should he put the test of doctrines so much

more bold, challenging the very foundations of belief on which the whole system of Jewish religion rested, at the very outset of his ministry there? And their eyes were naturally fixed upon the multitude, as appears in the entire narrative of John, watching intently every change of sentiment, marking how the groups would form and melt away, how the bearded Jews would turn to each other, the women put forth a shriller voice of comment, heard here and there among the murmuring of the deeper tones. "Of a truth this is the Prophet!" "This is the Christ!" mingled with the corrective comment which asked "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" "Should he not come out of the seed of David, out of the town of Bethlehem?" Perhaps there were some there who remembered that scene in the Temple so long ago when old Simeon blessed an infant of that race, perhaps some who never could forget the children slain by Herod's cruel order that an infant King of the Jews might not escape him. But this wonderful figure in the midst of them, this voice which went to their very hearts, were they not those of a man from Galilee? Thus rose the tumult, the discussions, the close controversy, carried on half in pantomime among the crowd, which fixed the eyes of the beloved disciple, keen with anxiety for his Master's safety among this mass of excited men, and aware, perhaps, of the officers of the Sanhedrim who were making their way through the debating groups, yet who could not help hearing what he said, and could not escape the magic of his influence. The narrative is so instinct with life, so full of the breathless interest with which the writer saw and heard every new voice, every rising murmur, every sign of enthusiasm or perplexity, that our attention is almost drawn from the Divine Speaker, to watch as John did those vicissitudes of the crowd.

All the time the council must have been sitting anxious, too, and gloomy in their chamber awaiting further news, expecting, till he was brought before them to be examined, to be confounded in his pretensions by their superior wisdom and learning, perhaps, they may have hoped, to be sent back quietly to his native Galilee, and so got rid of without further trouble. One can imagine how they remained there impatient, hearing the sound of the great crowd, with sometimes a word or two of the clear voice which dominated its murmurs coming in upon the air; and how now one and now another would go out with a curse in his heart at the folly of the multitude, "this people that knoweth not the law," to see the other courts empty and acquire the angry consciousness that all men were going after the new teacher. After long suspense, in the evening when the people had dispersed, the officers of the Sanhedrim came back abashed to tell their tale. They had not been able to arrest him. The men were overawed, still under the influence of their emotion. They did not put forth any pretext of having been stopped by the crowd, or intimidated by the popular enthusiasm, but stood without excuse abashed before their angry masters. "Never man spake like this man." What an excuse to make to those in whose minds this was the very reason for securing him! The exasperated rulers would seem to have been at the end of their strength as of their patience, and could only fling a dart of scorn at the weakness of their servants. "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?" they asked with hot contempt. But this speech seems to have awakened the dormant feeling of Nicodemus, who had seen and heard the man of whom they spoke, and whose sympathies, no doubt, were with the shamed and silenced officials rather than with his brethren of the Sanhedrim. He was not

moved as yet to put himself entirely on the side of the new prophet, and yet he could not hear this cheap condemnation of him (knowing well as he did that never man spake like this man) without protest. "Doth our law judge any man before it hears him?" he said. In such a case even the claim of justice sounds like that of a partisan. "Art thou also of Galilee?" cry the bigots, turning upon him "Search and know? Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." It was not much of an argument, perhaps, in reply to those who had heard and seen for themselves; but such as it was it silenced Nicodemus, not ripe for any great confession, as it had silenced the police and guardians of the public peace.

Nevertheless, this hot discussion also seems to have passed without consequence, for we find that early in the next morning our Lord came again to the Temple, where "all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them." We are warned by all commentators not to take the wonderful and beautiful incident here inserted as part of the authentic record. It is suggested that the story of the woman taken in adultery is probably a very old fragment of tradition, preserved by being inscribed upon the margin of an early transcript of the gospel, and from thence transferred to the text by a succeeding copyist. It is one of the most remarkable and, we might say, characteristic incidents in the narrative, one of the most divine—in that austere calm of mercy, unpunishing but all-convicting, which affords us so wonderful a view of eternal purity yet compassion. The fact that it was not, as some say, in St. John's original gospel is by no means an assertion that it is not true, but only that it cannot be received as part of his witness to his Master. It must, therefore, be set aside in the history, though as an illustration there could be no more touching or beautiful picture. We pass on accordingly to the

unquestioned record, which gives a completely changed character to the discussions and conversations of this day.

The Feast of Tabernacles was by this time over. The pilgrims had departed on their homeward way, the populace of Jerusalem had returned to its daily life. Common work and toil replaced the exceptional attendances at the Temple. The throng of worshippers or holiday-makers, or both, had gone back to the loom and the workshop, and the affairs of the house. But the work of Jesus, which was not for the multitude alone, was far from being accomplished, and when he came back through the deserted courts and resumed his teaching to the little group of the more devout who would still assemble there, the interest does not lessen though the scene is changed. He was in "the treasury," a place opening into the court of the women, when he opened his instruction: and the great golden candlestick which stood there is supposed to have suggested the opening words of his address, "I am the Light of the world." The spot was close to the council-chamber of the Sanhedrim, where his voice could be heard as he spoke, and, no doubt, there were members of that body, or of its close adherents, among the Pharisees who immediately broke in upon him with their questions. "Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true," they said, rudely interrupting his discourse. It is with perfect calm and composure, and a lofty tranquillity, not allowing himself to be disturbed, that Jesus replies. He had already, in a previous discussion of the same kind, referred to the witness of John the Baptist: but he does not now recur to that. "The Father that sent me" is now the sole witness whom he cites. The questions which these hearers of the learned class ask are less intelligent, as they are also less, much less, respectful than those of the crowd. They treat the preacher with

a contemptuous abruptness, breaking in continually upon his discourse, "Where is thy Father?" "Who art thou?" they cried: "Does he mean to kill himself?" —to each other, probably with a harsh laugh of angry criticism, when he warns them, as he did the multitude, that the time is coming when they shall seek him but shall not be able to find him. In the midst of these interruptions there would seem to have gathered a larger company of the devout, who were in the constant habit of attendance at the Temple, while he spoke with the Pharisees: and the fragments of high exposition which these wranglers permitted to be heard reached the judgment, at least, if not the heart, of the wider group, which probably came by degrees towards the open portico to look into the chamber where he sat, discussing his own claim to be heard, with that unchangeable calm unmoved by any impertinence. And "many believed on him," a strange statement amid the opposition and angry contempt of the others, and the broken fragments which were all they could hear of what he said.

The inner circle, no doubt, dissolved from time to time, one set of questioners dispersing to betake themselves to some more important duty than that of cross-examining the Galilean—whom, probably, they thought a personage without danger now that the impulsive and easily-affected crowd had gone: while another took their places from among the fringe of silent listeners outside, whose faces bore signs of more sincere interest and emotion. And there now ensued a very remarkable conversation between these semi-converts and the teacher to whom the hearts of all men were known. He looked at them as they drew near to fill up the places of those who had gone, and addressed them in words which express at once the peradventure which was still in their hearts. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples

indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." That he should have lifted that benign yet austere countenance upon those proud Jews, strong in the conviction that their national faith was but to be extended and made sovereign over all by the Messiah whom they faintly begin to see in him—and received their first beginnings of faith with so penetrating a speech, is very remarkable. He who would not permit his disciples to forbid the wandering volunteers who cast out devils in his name, but did not follow him, appears in a new light when he thus checks the devotees of Jerusalem. "If ye continue," the doubt might be tolerated, but not the strange promise made, as if they were only simple Galileans, to these men, trained from their childhood to exercise their faculties upon the law. It roused at once the pride of race in the bosom of those citizens of the holy city, conservators of the law and worship which they hoped were about to become universal. They answered him with the quickness of wonder and dawning offence. "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

The test thus put to them was one they could ill bear. Captivities and bondage they had known many, notwithstanding this proud assertion of independence, and at that very moment were within the rigid bond of Roman empire. But yet in their hearts they had always considered themselves the reigning race, the chosen people, sole depositaries of the truth of God, destined to subdue the world and enforce everywhere the law which was theirs; and even Messiah could not be permitted to question their superiority. "We be Abraham's seed"—Abraham, to whom the promise was given that his seed should reign over the whole earth. They must have grown more and more angry, revolting against

the doctrine which proclaimed them all the servants of sin, as other men were, as he went on; until at last their arrogance and pretence of superiority drew from him the tremendous accusation, "Ye are of your father the devil." Had the Pharisees, the original controversialists, come back by this time to take the part of their brethren? The words "Now ye seek to kill me" would seem to imply this: at all events, the Jews who were around, notwithstanding their partial belief, took up the challenge and threw it back upon himself.

Nothing could have been more dangerous for his own safety than such a discussion; for there was no longer round him the partial protection of the multitude, the contagion of their excitement and enthusiasm, but only the party whose entire principle of life was struck at the very roots by his assumption, and whom he never for a moment conciliates or yields to. The gentleness, the pity, the toleration, and profound understanding of every human difficulty which have been so conspicuous in him here disappear. The sinner, the publican, the beggar, all who were in misery, all who had learnt the impossibilities of this life and their own powerlessness, had been received by him with never-failing tenderness. Even after the young man who was not able to make up his mind to the sacrifice of his wealth and importance, Jesus had looked with an affectionate regret, not blaming, only longing that he might learn a truer insight. But with these men in the Temple all his tenderness disappears. Their confidence in themselves, and certainty that they are not as other men: their resistance to the spiritual meaning of the teaching which has compelled the acquiescence of their intellect, even when they are forced to believe in it: their determination to understand him, the great revealer of the Father, as but a new official in the service of the Temple "re-

storing Israel" to the first place in the world, and bringing themselves into the highest distinction—are beyond even the tolerance of his perfect understanding. The selfishness which is often so unconscious, of sinful nature, can be turned into self-abnegation, the unclean can be made clean, the demoniac sane: but what save the utter beating down of judgment can change the Pharisee? Not sons of Abraham as is their boast, but sons of the devil, doing his works, maintaining his everlasting lie. "Your father Abraham!" Our Lord has come to a time and place in which he no longer retains any reserve upon the facts of his own wonderful being; but we may, perhaps, be permitted to imagine that the high human indignation in him, and consciousness of all the wrong that had been done in that holy and faithful name, a little forced his utterance. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: he saw it and was glad." This sudden extraordinary gleam of light into the mystery and the unity of a world of which that was the all-pervading ever-continued thread of story and of interest, disclosed, in fact, the highest glory of Abraham's race. But the hearers may be pardoned if, bewildered and overawed, as they evidently were, it was the incredible fact thus suggested that struck them most, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" It would follow naturally in the course of the narrative that here he rose, having concluded his argument, to withdraw from that scene of controversy which was so little congenial to him; and there standing, looking at those fanatics for Moses, those children of Abraham, uttered the wonderful words, "Before Abraham was I am."

The majesty of these brief syllables, the extraordinary grandeur and simplicity of the assertion are beyond all comment. "They took up stones to cast at Him," the

record goes on, but vainly, who could doubt defeated by their own hearts that beat and their own arms that trembled: and "Jesus hid Himself and went out of the Temple," concealed by the dazzling and bewilderment that must have come to every eye.

CHAPTER II.

MESSIAS.

IN the meantime, while these incidents had been taking place in the consecrated city where all things were to be fulfilled and accomplished, the wonderful background of life in Galilee had gone on surrounding and enclosing all. It is not needful for our purpose, as has been said, nor according to our desire, to enter fully into that history which, whatever may be the beliefs of those who read it, must always remain the most wonderful on earth. In Jerusalem our Lord walks in the midst of contention and questioning, constrained (if we may with reverence use such a word) by the pressure of circumstances about him to answer for himself, to maintain his high unwavering assertion of his own office and character, to leave his adversaries no excuse. But in Galilee the Son of God is also the Child of Nature, moving in a harmonious circle of beneficence and wisdom, letting no sufferer pass unheeded, no human want unsupplied, shedding forth from him without effort, as one who could not help it, not only acts but words of grace, such as human breath had never uttered before.

From the shores of the lake to the summit of those green and rounded hills, where every slope seems to include a grassy platform for the listeners, a knoll for the speaker, as they descend in soft circles to the

water line—all is eloquent with recollections. Along the beach with its fishing villages, now mostly swept away, with its fishing cobbles laid up on the gleaming shore, and the soft hills on the other side in a haze of sunshine, the pilgrim feels as if there wants but a little, and he might himself see that wayfarer moving along, calling the sunburnt fishers from the boats, turning round benignant to see those two following who had been with John in the wilderness, pausing to cast a look of kindness upon the tax-gatherer at his bar, whom no man cared to speak to, but whom he bid to follow too. I can never forget a Sunday morning there, a rapture of light and freshness, soft waters rippling on the beach, soft airs lifting the opened hangings of the tent, the lake lying calm in the great glory of the sunshine, the distant outlines all veiled in mists of light, and a sense of still adoration, hushed as if by his very presence; nor the subsequent voyage across the lake to where the city which rejected him, that Capernaum which was exalted unto heaven, lies dumb in inarticulate ruin, not one stone standing on another, upon the water's edge. All blessed was the day, the light, the hour, even the sudden quick wind that sprang up, so that the boatmen, like those of old, had to "toil in rowing" against the rapid rising of the waves: all blessed, though filled since then with other poignant memories not to be forgotten, and the sigh never long silent in the heart,

> "For the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still."

The associations which gather round this scene are of a different order from those which belong to Jerusalem: not that disturbance or contention were wanting in this more than any other human scene: but no gloomy pres-

TIBERIAS: SEA OF GALILEE: THE ONLY CITY NOW EXISTING THERE.

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ence of rigid law-perverting Pharisee, or spruce sceptic of a scribe in borrowed plumes of heathen philosophy, can sully the fresh morning of divine life, the harmony of holy teaching, the blessings of the mount, the sacred story, fable, allegory which he told as he sat, withdrawn a little in his ship upon the silvery water's edge, to the eager multitude, and explained as he walked along, or rested on the way, to his wondering disciples. In Jerusalem that great tragedy is ever tragic, and the end never hid from the impassioned and anxious spectatorship of all the ages. But the heart turns to Galilee with a rebound of happiness, of loving contemplation, and eternal hope, and we all feel again as if no cross or agony could be: "be it far from Thee, Lord!" but only the spectacle of a whole world revolving about the Sun of Righteousness, recognising its God walking as a man among men.

Our Lord returned to his home in the north after the controversies and the dangers of the Feast of Tabernacles. But by this time all the privacy and sweetness of his early life was over, and the province awaited him in a fever of excitement, lit up by many causes. Not only the fierce fire of opposition raging among those who found in his teachings a contradiction of all their own rigid system, a setting aside of the ceremonial law in which they lived and moved and had their being: and that responsive conflagration of enthusiasm which moved the people whom the Lord fed and healed, to attempt to take him by force and make him their king: but a thousand individual hopes and expectations of deliverance from suffering, and salvation from death, of satisfaction of doubts and confirmation in faith: must have been growing in every village, by every path along which it was hoped that he might pass. The country waited for him, alert for every signal: many a woman at her

door intent upon the way, thinking of her sick child or ailing husband, as well as the groups in the synagogue and the coteries of the learned and superior persons, who even in these simple regions clustered round every centre of teaching. It must have been felt that when he returned again after all those controversies and commotions at Jerusalem, something decisive must happen, either the revelation in power of his office as Messiah, or some demonstration that it was not he which should restore Israel. Emissaries had come from Jerusalem, always with the intention of entangling him in his talk, of finding some occasion of judgment; and Pharisees and Sadducees, priests and scribes, were all on the alert to make this the final episode in a career which shook their world to its foundations.

Jesus himself would seem to have responded in the full force of his human nature, not less affected by factious opposition than by the tenderness of belief, to this great excitement of feeling. He had never hesitated to pronounce his judgment upon the formalist and the hypocrite; but now that all the powers of evil were rising against him, those lips which had spoken nothing but blessing, and whose familiar language was always that of love and charity, opened with lofty reproof, delivering the sentence of supreme disapproval, the "Woe unto you Pharisees and Sadducees, hypocrites," which joined together the two contending sects, as far as the poles apart from each other, but yet united in offence and bitter opposition to the springing of the new life. They harassed his steps wherever he appeared, making every detail of existence into a controversy, plying him with cunning questions, converting the very repast offered in seeming courtesy into an occasion of wrangling. The crisis was now so near that all ordinary restraints began to be broken. Out of doors the multitude so thronged about him "that

they trod one upon another." When the rumour ran that he was coming, every house was emptied of its inhabitants, every corner filled with anxious gazers, the sick brought out and laid in the streets in all the horrors of primitive disease, an extraordinary feature of the scene, hailing him with a clamour of beseeching voices, maimed and wounded and forlorn, trembling with fever, writhing with pain, holding up withered limbs, and

AIN-ET-TIN: SEA OF GALILEE.

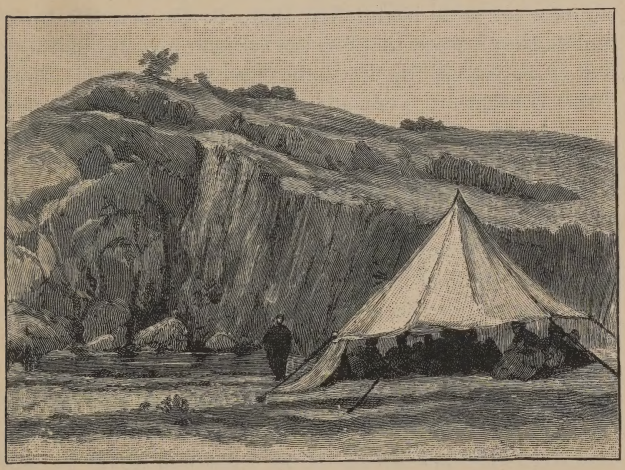
uncovering sores. Bad enough even now is the wretched throng which crowds about the traveller from whom only money is to be had, or the miserable shadow of money, the infinitesimal Turkish coins of which a stranger rarely understands the insignificance: but when it was health, restoration, new life that was to be looked for! And the well-to-do of every village gathered conspicuous on the road, the rulers of the synagogue, the lawyers who interpreted the law, and laid many burdens on men's shoulders which they themselves did not touch with a finger: the

Pharisees, with all their pretences and exactions, lying in wait, keeping an evil eye upon every movement, misinterpreting every act and word: while the multitude closed in around, all bent upon personal advantage, the recollection of those miraculous meals, the bread of Bethsaida, the wine of Cana, and, probably, who could tell, the hope of other gains and other prodigies from the hands which could command everything—filling their minds with a passion of desire and eagerness. The morning time of natural beneficence and harmony was over; they were ready to tear him in pieces, in faith as well as in opposition; on the one side in fierce acquisitiveness to get what they wanted—on the other in hatred to sweep him out of their path: but the one as self-seeking as the other, a rage of belief as well as a rage of wrath. Between the crowd, hungry for miracle, impatient to have his mission proved by some great convulsion of nature, and his enemies, desiring a sign and watching his every movement, especially on the Sabbath day, which their vigilant superstition made anything but a day of rest—it would be hard to tell which was worst.

It was to escape from this tumult, so disappointing to the human heart of him, who, though he knew what was in man, had, doubtless, in the intense longing of his love hoped as many a reformer has done since, that this time something different was to be looked for—with so much more reason than any other, though with the certainty so much stronger than any other, of the tragic end of all: that Jesus left his favoured province and wandered forth towards the great sea "into the borders of Tyre and Sidon," and even farther afield "through all the cities of Decapolis," which may have included Damascus. It gives a new interest to that city of enchantment to think there is even a peradventure that "these blessed feet,

"'Which nineteen hundred years ago were nailed
For our advantage to the bitter cross,'"

may have walked its unchanging streets. But of this journey there is no record except in a faint glimpse here and there showing the wandering party in unlikely places on that way. It is supposed to have been on their return towards Galilee that they passed by the



PILGRIMS' TENT: AIN-ET-TIN, NEAR BETHSAIDA.

fine Roman colony called Cæsarea Philippi, with its temples and grottoes, among the silvery intricacies of the sources of Jordan, where still the relics of the great Temple of Pan disturb the surface of the rocks, and the little Syrian village of Banias stands brightly amid a refreshing greenness of foliage familiar to Western eyes, dearer than the gray olives, or dark pines, or palms of Eastern vegetation. It was here that Peter's confession of the Lord Christ was made, and rewarded by his Mas-

ter's emphatic approval and promise. The same journey has appeared to many commentators to make it likely that it was on some height of Hermon, under the level of the gleaming snows, that the Transfiguration took place, instead of upon the familiar Tabor of the home landscape, so round and green. But these can only be regarded as suggestions, since neither Hermon nor Damascus are mentioned in the record. It is difficult, however, to imagine what could have taken them to Cæsarea Philippi, unless they passed there in the course of a long journey: but Tabor would lie in their way on their return from "the borders of Tyre and Sidon" to Galilee, passing close by the little Nazareth, the name of which Jesus still bore, and where his early years were passed.

Whatever may be the fact about these details, which are of so much inferior importance, it is evident that the mystic incident of the Transfiguration took place about this time. It had become necessary that those disciples, who were soon to become apostles, the chosen witnesses of his life, as of his death and resurrection, should be prepared for the overwhelming revelation which awaited them, of the end, so far different from their hopes, of their Lord's ministry. It was while travelling by the sea that his first intimation of what was about to happen was received by his companions with incredulity and even reproof, as the mere utterance of a fit of depression, impossible to contemplate, a sort of gloomy imagination not to be tolerated. Peter's exclamation "Be it far from thee, Lord!" was indeed the most natural of utterances, though it called forth the strongest expression of displeasure to which his Master ever gave vent. "Peter took him and began to rebuke him," for despondency, no doubt, for too dark a view of men and their depravity. It was on the same journey that the impetuous disciple had proclaimed his certain faith in

the office of his Master, the one utterance following the other with very little interval between; and the words of the Lord, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona," had scarcely died out of the air, before he had to bid the same eager speaker "Get thee behind me! for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of man." And it was very shortly after that he led them up into the high mountain apart, where they saw a glorious vision, and heard the conversation of heaven about that which they had refused to credit, that which their minds refused to receive, the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. It seems little likely that they derived much benefit from this at the time. The glory was too much for their dazzled eyes. The bewildered suggestion of Peter about the three tabernacles, shows how little comprehension of the real object of that wonderful incident had penetrated his mind; the glorious robes, the shining countenances, the sudden transportation into a new world of wonder, in which external life disappears like a shadow, flooded his mind with amaze; and a shrine to shield the human eyes and make worship possible was all his strained faculties could think of, not the subject of that high discourse which was intended to bring the things of God down to the capacity of man. But they remembered afterwards, and knew what it meant.

Many of the most pregnant sayings of our Lord, his most wonderful addresses and touching offices of mercy, were done at this time. The repeated announcements of his own approaching suffering and death were too clear, as it appears to us who have known all our lives what followed, to be mistaken or misapprehended: but it is evident that the disciples still continued to misapprehend, and did not, for some time even after these anticipations were fulfilled, perceive how distinctly they had

been warned of what was to come. It was now that he called a little child and set him in the midst of them, and told these eager enthusiasts, still bent upon great place and promotion in the kingdom of Messiah, that they must become as little children if they would so much as enter into the kingdom of heaven; and instructed them that if a brother offended not seven times but seventy times seven he should yet be forgiven;

ON THE SHORES OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

and gathering the little ones about him, commanding to forbid them not, blessed the little wondering group upon the way with a tenderness never to be forgotten. And it was now that, his divine heart more soft than ever in the solemnity of the approaching end, he looked upon and loved the young man who had kept all the Commandments from his youth up, yet could not find it in his heart to gain perfection by giving up all he had to the poor. That it should have been at the very moment

of this youth's shrinking from so great a sacrifice that Jesus loved him, is one of the most wonderful touches of nature and humanity, past all conceiving. The story of the Good Samaritan (was it told upon the way as the travellers ascended slowly the steep scarp of the rocky road that led from Jericho to Jerusalem?) and of the Prodigal Son, belong to this solemn time: and it was now that with a melancholy irony, seeing the guests crowding up to the best places at the Pharisees' feast, at some town where he rested, he bade them for more honour choose the lowest room, so that they might be advanced, and not expose themselves to the ignominy of being made to give place to their betters. But it would be vain to attempt to enumerate all the wonderful words and acts either of that last season in Galilee, the country of his predilection, while he still lingered upon the shores of the lake, and by the pleasant greenness of the hills, or in the lingering details of the wanderings between Galilee and Jerusalem which followed.

His setting out upon the journey from which he was never to return save in the mystery of resurrection, was more than usually memorable. He had sent out some time before seventy of his disciples, two by two "before his face into every city, whither he himself would come," and received their joyful report as he went on, following in their steps, group by group coming back to rejoin him as he proceeded on his journey. It is recorded of one of the villages in the Samaritan country which lay in the way to Jerusalem, that they refused to receive him, in some access of hot local opposition, and he had to turn aside to rest in another. That James and John, those fiery spirits who a little time before had desired of him that they should sit one on his right hand and the other on his left in his kingdom, should now, half in righteous indignation, half with the swelling

sense of supernatural power and desire to silence for ever every cavilling tongue, have desired to call down fire from heaven (in the exultation of their recent experience that even devils were subject to them in his name) to consume the churlish town—is so natural in the extraordinary circumstances that we feel with them the intolerable impatience which such an affront would produce. But when he turns and rebukes them, the higher nature is so natural, too, in supreme comprehension and pity that every thought is silenced. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." It was John, the apostle of love, who had spoken—a man of vehement feelings, yet whose whole teaching and doctrine merged in his later life into the reiteration of the lessons of brotherhood. He would have destroyed in his hasty impulse, love of his Master being so hot in him: but he would have been the first to quench with tears and with horrified entreaties the ruin he had made. His Master knew him far better than he knew himself.

That there might be a certain justification for the villagers from an economical point of view in their refusal to receive him with the multitude which followed, an endless train—which, though no doubt it began to fall off as the distance from Galilee increased, was still a vast crowd of people enough to swamp any rural place—we may also allow. That they fell off by degrees is apparent from the broken words which came out of one band after another as they paused, reason compelling them to perceive that short of the tremendous decision to leave all and follow him, they had gone far enough. For Jesus was not now bound to the great feast in which all Jews were concerned, but to the Feast of the Dedication, at which attendance was not obligatory: and it was now winter when the roads were at their worst and the weather uncertain. As they came to say farewell to him

there must have been many a suppressed sound of weeping, and lingering look behind. "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." "Lord, let me bid farewell to my household." These were the cries which they uttered in their emotion, not able to tear themselves away, yet knowing they could not go on. Our Lord represses this cry of strained emotion with, we may imagine, the usual smile of tender understanding on his face. He knew when it was only the passion of temporary sorrow, the pang of leave-taking which burst forth in those cries, and in his divine toleration did not blame them. "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head," he says to him whose feelings had been too much for him, who could not bear to go, yet probably was all unadapted to stay: and we may imagine him looking after them with a look never to be forgotten, as one by one in weeping and humiliation—not able for that sacrifice, bound by all the ties of home, yet almost equally unable to separate themselves from his side: they turned back to their impoverished and diminished Galilee, the villages and rural places he had loved, yet where he was to live and teach never more. Would that man whom the Lord himself had bidden to follow, go too, to bury his father, not capable of the great renunciation? Would they say to each other as the windings of the road hid the band of pilgrims from their sight, drying their eyes, recovering their voices, that they would see him again when they went up for the Passover—the next summer he would surely be back to bless their fishing and console all their troubles?

The diminished band went on, their faces steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, held back by no obstacles, turning aside to another village when rejected by the first,

and now more easily lodged in their decreased numbers, and more intimate and near to each other than when distracted by the requirements of the crowd; the twelve surrounding him most closely of all, the companions of the seventy falling into the band from point to point along the way, the women of Galilee attending and ministering to him, his own mother, ever humble and reverent, assuming no superior place. Nothing can be more difficult than to trace with any exactness the wanderings of this prolonged and double journey, broken up in the midst by a rapid visit to Jerusalem, or to define what was done before that visit, and what after, during the time which he spent in Judea before the final proceedings of the last Passover. The pilgrims would seem, at all events, to have lingered on the way, perhaps, kept back at first by the sweeping rains that pour down in torrents in the wintry season; and if we conclude that they maintained their course more or less directly for Jerusalem, there is little incident to record except the first visit to Bethany, where the sisters, afterwards so well known, and who would seem to have been at once numbered among the dearest friends of his lowliness, received him into their house. These two women stand out at once before us in the extreme brevity of the record, in a simple episode which makes them instantly recognisable like neighbours of our own. Martha, the thrifty housewife, cumbered about many things, was the mistress of the house, and anxious with all the affection and homely pride of a rustic hostess to serve that visitor with her best, and entertain him like a king; but Mary, the younger sister, thought of nothing but himself, and how to hear every word and catch every look. Jesus did not blame that notable, good woman for her absorption in household cares, until it became necessary to clear the rapt listener from the charge of idleness and indiffer-

ence. This is the only mention of that little privileged household in any gospel but that of St. John: and the brother is not named who might be the master of another house, or absent upon his ordinary affairs, on the occasion of this first visit.

It must have been from Bethany that Jesus and his disciples went into the Temple, where they appeared quietly, a little travelling band, without the multitude that usually dogged their footsteps. There is something in the narrative that follows which suggests the early morning, the Sabbath day's calm, and no one near to disturb the quiet and devout progress of the little group, which, no doubt, had gone up early before the world was astir. They saw "as they passed by, a man which was blind from his birth," sitting by the city gate, or in a porch of the Temple in the early sunshine. Our Lord stopped to look at him, his attention called by the question of his disciples, "Lord, who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" He must have been a man well known by the frequenters of the Temple that his circumstances were so familiar to these strangers. Jesus paused to see the object of the question, and then with a curious unwonted ceremony put the clay he had made upon the blind eyes and dismissed him quietly to wash in the pool of Siloam—perhaps in order to avoid the tumult which so striking a miracle would have caused: and proceeded—to all appearance almost without interruption—with his teaching as if nothing had happened. The whole transaction bears the mark of the utmost simplicity and naturalness. The man was not sought out for the miracle's sake: he uttered no petition, was, one may believe, taken by surprise altogether by the sudden operation; and though he had faith enough to go down the Temple hill to the Pool of Siloam, it was probably with no more than a wondering thrill of the

strange possibility that it might come true: for he was no believer, not a person of awakened intelligence at all: the great prophet of Nazareth about whom all men wondered, and whose character had been so hotly discussed in these very precincts, being to him only "a man called Jesus." But when he "came seeing," according to the brief and simple narrative, meeting the worshippers going up to the Temple, and all the neighbours who had known him all his life, a growing commotion arose. There is no reason to believe that he hastened back again to thank his deliverer as would have seemed natural, nor is there any sign about him of anything higher than a shrewd practical intelligence, appreciating the advantage he had gained and nothing more. He does not proclaim the wonder to the world, but comes back soberly, a prosaic person, pleased, no doubt, and happy in his restoration, but not demonstrative, nor even roused to any enthusiasm by the wonderful gift which he had received.

And now once more the scene of popular excitement and questioning which the Evangelist John has so special a gift of rendering, rises before us. The startled people collected round, growing into a crowd, as the well-known beggar of the gate, the blind man to whom they had given their alms as they went to worship for years, met them, with open eyes walking back towards his usual post. There arose immediately a babel of voices questioning and answering. "Is not this he that sat and begged?" some saying "it is like him," others "this is he." The man himself, less excited it would appear than the spectators, at once interposed to acknowledge his identity and to explain what had happened. The inconceivable calm of his attitude amid the excitement of the people is wonderful to behold. He seems as if he might be disposed to ask what all the fuss was about? "A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed

mine eyes and said unto me: go unto the Pool of Siloam and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." Then said they unto him "Where is he?" He said "I know not." Some zealots, it would appear, now joined the crowd, roused by the name, scenting again a controversy, a prosecution, a breach of the law of the Sabbath, in this sudden reappearance of the Galilean; and hurried the object of the miracle off to the Pharisees, perhaps to the office of the Sanhedrim, perhaps to some lesser bureau of government, where he might be examined at length. The story goes on with an extraordinary fulness of life and nature. Finding it impossible to deny the fact which was before their eyes, the officials confuse him with questions, demanding his opinion—which could have so little to do with the matter! finally sending for his parents, poor bewildered people who were yet wise enough to decline to answer compromising questions, and to refer their examiners to the chief actor himself. "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind," they reply; "but by what means he now seeth, or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself." The once-blind man seems to have been gradually aroused by the fight going on over him. His faculties awakened as his eyesight had done: his shrewd natural sense saw at once the fallacy of the angry assertions of his questioners. "Herein is a marvellous thing," he cried at length, "that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes." Among the fruitless, factious reasonings of the disturbed officials, striving to convince themselves and others that what they saw was not the fact, the shrewd untrained beggar of the Temple gates stands forth as the representative of sound sense and reason, unbiassed even by the gratitude which he owes, but does not seem to be in any way strongly affected by.

In the meantime, while that argument went on, all would seem to have been quiet in the Temple above. The most continuous discourse which has yet been reported to us in Jerusalem, Jesus seems to have delivered without interruption that day: not, we may be certain, without an audience, but one most likely of an unpolitical kind, the daily worshippers who never failed, with perhaps a greater leaven than usual of strangers and simple folk bound to no official maintenance of ritual and tradition. One can imagine the various committees of the Sanhedrim occupied with the new wonder that had been brought before them, messengers running to and fro with one communication after another, and ever-new precautions to be taken to keep this fact from the knowledge of the multitude: while all the time an act more great, the enunciation of the great truths of the Gospel went on undisturbed. Once more as always at Jerusalem it is his own great and unique mission, declared in the fullest terms, which our Lord explains to his hearers, without compromise or faltering. "I am the door of the sheep," by which alone they can enter the fold. "I am the good shepherd, I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received of my Father." Such words as these had been already said privately to the Apostles on several occasions, but had been received only with bewilderment and never understood until after everything was accomplished. Now they were proclaimed in the most public place of Jerusalem, a mystery which was as plain as the daylight afterwards, but now, what? nothing but blasphemy.

All our Lord's addresses delivered at Jerusalem are, we repeat, of the same nature. He does not repeat

there the teaching of the Galilean hills. All that he says at Jerusalem is blasphemy—or else it is true. There is no middle course. With the rulers, the judges, the learned of his nation he attempts no compromise at any time. To them he does not show himself merely as a benign instructor, the preacher of a new and divine code of faith and practice. It is his credentials which he places before them, the high assertion of his office, the claim of a position and authority to which theirs is as nothing. The poor to whom it was one sign of his divine mission that the Gospel was preached were no judges in that question. The Pharisees, the Scribes, the priests were the representatives of the government of Israel, the only tribunal of doctrine, the interpreters of the law and the prophets. And the words which he addressed to them within their hearing were emphatically what they declared them to be—blasphemy: or else the only truth for the salvation of Israel and of mankind.

It could not be without a purpose that this great difference was made. And the words which he uttered in the Temple court while all the commotion over the blind beggar was going on in private, form the fullest and most connected discourse in which it is presented before us. The teaching of Jesus is never without this great claim: but in Jerusalem it is almost the claim alone which is his subject. He is the living water, the light of the world, the Good Shepherd—finally, the one and only being in the human race who *lays down his life that he may take it again.* Martyrs there have been before and since, sufferers involuntary, yet not unwilling, consenting to God's decrees; but never one of whom this could be said, who would dare to say it. Blasphemy, who could doubt it—or else:—The alternative was plain.

And who can wonder that after the uninterrupted utterance of that Sabbath morning there should have been "a division among the Jews for these sayings"? Not long could that calm last. He who did not come to bring peace but a sword, in this special region, to that organisation which it was his mission to replace and transform if not to destroy, could not long be left to tell the wondrous tale of his own being and office undisturbed. Much he had said that was wonderful before, but never anything so wonderful as this. "Many of them said, he hath a devil and is mad,"—what wonder? Take the words alone and they were more than madness, they were blasphemy, and the most tremendous assumption ever made by man. Yet those who looked upon him, who followed the discourse to its end and studied the speaker, knew that these were not the words of him that hath a devil, and that never man spake like this man. And evidently by this time the news of the last miracle had spread among the crowd and moved the baser sort, so that even the Pharisees had begun to ask: "Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

The Apostle pauses here to give a touch of local description. "It was winter, and Jesus walked in the Temple, in Solomon's porch," which is believed to have been the great cloister running along the eastern wall, which rested upon the vast vaults still existing called Solomon's stables, and looked towards the Mount of Olives. Like the Greek philosophers, the Hebrew teachers walked under the sheltering portico surrounded by their disciples, and talked and taught and explained, the spectators about ever ready to suggest a doubt or ask a question. There no doubt it was that he had found the blind man in the morning in some sheltered corner, waiting for the alms of the passers-by who knew him and his habitual seat. The whole scene is clear as if it had occurred yesterday.

And something of the bewildered confusion of the officials who wrangled over the beggar, incapable of denying the wonder that was before their eyes, seems to have filled the minds of the ruling class in the portico: once more brought face to face with this strange Prophet who appeared and disappeared in so sudden a way, and whom perhaps they had hoped after so long an interval to have been rid of: as they met and stopped and discussed among themselves, ever eyeing him who passed and repassed in that public walk, talking with those about him. At length some one more impetuous made himself the spokesman of the rest, backed up no doubt by a band that pressed behind him. "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly?" The interpellation is rude and abrupt, and no doubt many of the questioners were burning for an answer which should justify them in seizing him then and there. Our Lord's reply is given from a height of divine calm which it is evident exasperated his questioners beyond bearing. It would seem to have been half addressed to them and half a continuation to his own immediate followers of the foregoing discourse. "I have told you, and ye believed not," he says to his angry questioners: "the works that I do in my Father's name, they bare witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." And then was it? half turning to the more intimate band around him, that he said:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: And I will give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Could there be a more complete answer, a more thorough satisfaction of their desire for a blasphemous

utterance than this? And some of them were transported with rage and horror and took up stones to stone him. These missiles must have fallen from their hands when he turned upon them, ever calm, and asked for which of the works he had done they stoned him? an expression which looks as if they had actually begun to hurl at him the first pieces of marble or stone they could pick up, fragments of the perpetual reparation of the Temple. "For a good work we stone thee not: but for blasphemy," they cry. And surely it was blasphemy, the most unhesitating, the most assured, blasphemy, which by no possible excuses could be explained away.

It is most curious that at the final trial when Jerusalem was ransacked to procure witnesses against Jesus, no one of the men who seized those stones in their rage, who heard him say "I and my Father are one," who listened, scarcely able to contain themselves, to his assertion that he could lay down his life and take it again, produced themselves to prove these manifest blasphemies. Had they become his followers? were they so shaken by the majestic truth in him that they dared not bear that witness which would have been conclusive? Certain it is that only some trumpery accusation about destroying the Temple to which nobody gave the least faith was brought against him: and the hearers of these extreme words were silent. It is one of the most remarkable secondary details in the history.

But he had now done all that was needful in his proclamation of his mission. He withdrew from amidst the gathering crowd. His time was not yet: there were still things to be done and things to be said which made him conclude this portion of his ministry summarily to avoid a premature end. If there was anything supernatural in his disappearance from among the crowd we are not told. When they sought him to take

him he was gone: and for a few months more he returned to the life of the wandering prophet and teacher, with this difference that he went to his own Galilee no more.

The place to which Jesus and his disciples betook themselves was that spot on the other side of the river "beyond Jordan in the place where John at first baptized," where he remained for some time sought out by many, and pursued by questioners, by Scribes and Pharisees, by all the old traps and snares in conversation to which he had been used, as well as to many touching incidents and appeals. Many of the most remarkable of the parables were told among the people of this region, to whom his teaching was new, and who came out in crowds to meet and to attend him wherever he went. That the general interest was very great is clear from every word. The rulers from every synagogue, the lawyers and learned classes, and those Pharisees who occupied the principal place in every community, seem to have come out from every city and village to hear this man whom so many asserted to be the Messiah, but some an inspired demoniac casting out devils through Beelzebub the prince of devils. The wondering crowd followed him everywhere, pushing even into his private conversations with his disciples, following the pilgrim band with a rapt attention. Sometimes he turned from those intimate conversations, in his walks through that warm and flowery region where the early spring began to bloom, and the iris stood up in sheaves of snowy blossoms about the way, to throw forth a little apologue, a story to keep and ponder in the hearts of the common folk. The grain of mustard-seed which grew and waxed into a tree, the leaven which was hidden in the dry mass of meal until it pervaded the whole, the emphatic tale of the fig-tree which bore no fruit and was condemned, yet

spared till the husbandman had dug about its roots and given it another chance for life: all short, all full of meaning, teaching their lesson with one vivid illustration from the common objects about. His more intimate intercourse with his disciples seems to have been chiefly directed to their encouragement and the strengthening of their faith and trust in time to come. He bids them to look at the birds twittering upon every bush, things of no account, yet not one of them forgotten before God. He bids them consider the lilies of the field which toil not nor spin, yet are arrayed as never was Solomon in all his glory: how much more value are they than the sparrows, how much more than the flowers? When they are brought before the magistrates and into the synagogues to answer for themselves, he bids them take no thought what they are to say. "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in that same hour what ye ought to say." How troubled and perplexed they must have been as they listened, not knowing what he could mean, nor why it was necessary thus to comfort their hearts beforehand, as for some mysterious need yet to come: and how their excitement would be relieved yet disappointed when he turned aside and looked at the crowd behind and spoke his parable, leaving the germ of Divine story to quicken and fructify in the common soil, who may venture to describe? They could not shut their ears to the repeated references he made to something that was about to be accomplished at Jerusalem, which would make the next Passover a great era to them all: but, perhaps, in the dread anxiety and sense of approaching fate, would turn their faces from it, rather than confront that mysterious catastrophe of which no one could tell what it was to be.

Everything seems to become more emphatic as the stream of life thus rushes towards its end. The para-

bles, save in one or two cases, are shorter, more condensed, cut as it were in the stone. The Pharisee and the publican in the Temple, which stands out like a picture, not with the soft touch of the earlier general teaching, but such a contrast as no one could forget: the man who bade his soul to take rest, to eat and drink and be merry since he had stores laid up for many years—have a character far more intense and energetic than such allegories as that of the sower, the wheat and the tares, and many which he had spoken in the early days of his career, seated on the grassy hillside or in his little ship. His voice is now that of one who has no time to lose.

And yet the band must have lingered in the deep vale of Jordan where the spring came sooner than elsewhere, and where the people who had been the first hearers of John the Baptist dwelt, with his revelation in their minds, doubly eager to hear and see this man of whom John had spoken, and to determine for themselves if he were in truth the Messias of whom that son of the wilderness had proclaimed himself the forerunner. There seem to have been constant comparisons of his preaching, of his life and work with those of Jesus. "John did no miracles: but all things that John spake of this man are true." There could be no closer test of John's testimony than this progress through the very district that had rung with it, and in which there would be a natural inclination to exalt him at the expense of any rival. No doubt, the eagerness of the crowd that followed Jesus wherever he went, to see a miracle, must have been its strongest general motive: but there is no sign that our Lord did anything to satisfy, even in that accidental way in which most of his miraculous works were done, the curiosity of the people. Seldom or never, at any time did he seek an occasion to show his power. It flowed from

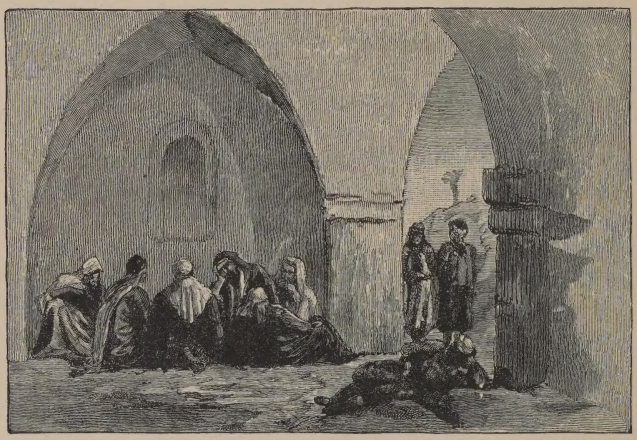
him when need was, the alms of Godhead. Here was no wilderness to demand a miraculous meal, the thing of all others which had moved the multitude in Galilee: and it was only when human need appealed to him that the Divine arm was raised.

Yet were there some exceptions to this reserve, when the need did present itself. At the entrance of a certain village on the way there stood a miserable band of ten lepers, not approaching closely, as was forbidden to them, but standing afar off, moved by sudden hope as the rumour on the road that preceded him reached their ears. It is a sight that any traveller may see at this day in that unchanging East. I shall never forget the thrill of horror and pity and strange realisation as of a familiar scene, that moved my own mind at the first sight of that line of dark figures muffled and shrouded, yet letting a dreadful face or shapeless limb appear to demonstrate their wretchedness—seated upon the edge of the road outside a smiling village, with their cry of appeal to every passer-by and the rattle of their money-boxes. Just so these men, dark shadows with veiled faces in the evening sunshine, must have stood as he approached, clamouring for an alms more great than any coin. "Go, show yourselves to the priest," was all he said, in a pause of his discourse: while probably the others that followed were seeking out what minute piece of money they could find to give to those most unhappy mendicants. The shout with which they must have started off on their hurried journey to fulfil that ceremonial necessity which stood between them and their return to life—scarcely pausing to see if the good news could be true, was, as the reader knows, interrupted by but one who, seeing, perhaps, his distorted hand take back some form of a human member, changed that shout into a cry of praise to God, and fall-

ing down upon his face gave thanks to his deliverer. Was it, perhaps, for the more utter conviction of James and John who had desired to call down fire from Heaven on the hostile village that our Lord paused to remark that this one grateful soul among so many, only eager to prove their emancipation, was a Samaritan? and that the benevolent "neighbour" whose story he told them to point the moral of perfect charity was of that despised people too.

When they got as far as Jericho upon their way, another incident followed. There must always have been some messengers going before to provide lodging and food for so large a party, not to speak of that intangible rumour which goes before the travellers announcing the coming of any notable person, such as somehow arises even in our own northern regions, and far more in the East. The blind man by the wayside heard it, and roused himself, as the lepers had done, to a new hope. Perhaps in the fellowship of misery he might have heard the story from one of them hurrying homewards to make his deliverance known. We see incidentally from this narrative that there was again a multitude accompanying the pilgrims as they moved onward, no doubt a little crowd from every village eager to hear, and still more to see any prodigy, pressing upon the steps of the wayfarers. The blind beggar by the way could not see who was passing, but the hum of the multitude reached his eager ears, and he would seem to have begun his cry (possibly as he was in the habit of beginning his singsong appeal for charity) before it was possible it could be heard by the ear to which it was addressed. "Jesus, thou Son of David! Jesus, thou Son of David!" He had been told that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by, but must have had some other knowledge that dictated that name. It would seem that the Apostles

had become weary by this time of those perpetual outcries of the multitude, or the cynical ingratitude of the lepers may have disgusted them—for those of them who were in advance rebuked the blind man for his ceaseless cry. Not so their Master, who heard no cry for mercy unmoved; and the train followed on to Jericho with the once-blind man following, surrounded, we may be sure,



KHAN ON THE ROAD TO JERICHO, BY TRADITION THAT OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

by the wondering and delighted crowd, straining his opened eyes, let us hope, to follow him whose benignant countenance had been the first thing they saw.

The wintry weather had lost all its rigour in that ever warm and fertile plain where, deep below the level of the ocean, summer has laid out a teeming garden of everlasting warmth and greenness. The dusty convoy had wound along, seen like a moving speck across the levels of the landscape, receiving from every hamlet its con-

tingent, growing as it proceeded, with those that followed and with those that came out to meet the wonderful travellers, during the whole course of the day; and Jericho itself had by this time heard the news of the miracle, and rushed out of all its streets scarcely more eager to see the face of the prophet than that familiar figure of blind Bartimæus, known to every child, the beggar on the roadside, now marching along with the throng of wondering attendants and eyes transfused with light and tears, that saw. The story of the humble Zacchæus, a man of so little account in his smallness of stature and unimportance, that he would have been swept by in the progress of the crowd, had he not climbed up into the tree where he could see and be unseen, would come in as a still more effective parable to the Pharisees, who in such an important place as Jericho must have been many, and whose indignation at the Teacher's preference of the despised tax-gatherer would break all bounds. From that city of the plain, lying in the still heat of its low level, Jesus might look across to that grim boundary, the weird and contorted mountains with their convulsed pinnacles and ravines like scars in the rock, which were the scene of that early and mysterious episode of his life which is called the Temptation: that was the first chapter of his career, it was meet that he should pass by a spot full of such memories on his way to the last.

The greatest of all the miracles, the crown and climax of his work in this kind, was now preparing; and it is almost the only one in which we can suppose that there was any predetermined intention, seeing that it did not like all the rest spring from the necessities or occurrences of the moment. In the case of Lazarus, our Lord did visibly await the time in which this final act should have its full solemnity as a sign and prodigy. In the

case of the young man at Nain, he had met the burial procession and seen the anguish of the mother, such anguish as, being there with that power in his hand, he could not pass by. But in this, every circumstance was full of meaning. He did not for once bestir himself at the first cry of the appeal, "he whom thou lovest is sick": but remained quietly where he was "for two days," leaving the sickness to run its fatal course. Where he was at this time we are not distinctly told, except that it was beyond the bounds of Judea, and probably still on the other side of Jordan, to which he returned after his missionary journeys as for the moment his settled place of abode. When at the end of the two days he proposed to his disciples to go to Judea, he was surrounded at once by anxious remonstrances, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" This would seem to establish that there could have been no intermediate visit to Jerusalem, since that attempt to stone him is the last recorded. When they perceived that he would go, there is a tragic resignation in the tone of the disciples. "Let us also go that we may die with him," says Thomas, the sceptic, he who found it so hard to believe the deeper mysteries of the Gospel. Clearly he perceived what was personal and positive with no illusions.

It would be at once vain and presumptuous to retell the story of that most affecting episode. "Our friend Lazarus" was well known to the wandering band, who probably had found rest and shelter in his peaceful village many a night while spending the day amid the contentions of Jerusalem. The name of Bethany must have meant hospitality, a kind welcome, and peaceful repose to them all, far enough off from the city to escape all its noise and distractions, yet not beyond the limit of a Sabbath day's journey, or an evening

JERICHO ROAD: TRADITIONAL SPOT WHERE THE MAN FELL AMONG THIEVES.

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walk into the grateful quiet, the rustle of the corn and the soft shade of olive-trees. They were so much concerned, however, for their Master's safety, which was their chief thought, that anxiety for Lazarus seems to have held a very secondary place in their minds: and it is evident that they took their way with great reluctance towards the country in which his far more precious life was in danger.

It must have been with the sense of an escape, temporary at least, from an ever-threatening peril, that after all the overwhelming emotion of these scenes at Bethany, the little band closed once more around their Lord, and encircled him as he went down again from the pleasant slope, where all the winds blow sweet and fresh over the hill-country of Judea, into the valley of the Jordan and along the northern road by which as yet no pilgrims were coming to the feast. This time there are no further details of a public mission. The little band goes silently away into the obscurity and quiet, "to a city called Ephraim," which no one has identified, but which probably lay to the north-east of Jerusalem towards Samaria, but on the edge of the wilder country about Jordan—out of the common route, perhaps still within sight of those rocky and awful mountains of the Quarantania with their terrible cañons and terraces, where the Temptation had taken place. The town could have been at no great distance from Jerusalem, as we measure distances, but lost in the depths of an unknown region to those who travelled everywhere on foot and who avoided dangers by keeping to the accustomed way.

But how long Jesus remained there, or if he did anything but rest in solemn anticipation of all the mysteries that were about to be accomplished, we are not told. As it was the time of the Passover which was to be the moment of his supreme offering, and he desired "with

desire," that is with all his heart, to accomplish those rites for the last time, and eat that common supper with his disciples, before fulfilling and abolishing the great typical sacrifice, it was essential that he should remain hidden and quiet until his hour had come; for by this time the factions of the Jews had thrown off all disguise, and the high priests had given orders that he was to be taken into custody wherever found. No doubt Jerusalem had been stirred to its depths by the last and greatest miracle which he had accomplished in that hurried and unexpected appearance between two periods of exile, when no one looked for him, appearing and disappearing again before any warrant or officer could be sent after him. And now absolute silence enveloped him around, for a few weeks perhaps—it could scarcely be more:—before the supreme moment came of the world's history, and the climax of his work on earth.

CHAPTER III.

THE END OF THE JEWISH DISPENSATION.

IT is a work beyond the necessities of this book, and beyond, I am glad to think at once the powers and the requirements of a writer of the nineteenth century, to rewrite or to attempt to amplify or render more clear the great story of that Divine tragedy accomplished at Jerusalem, at once the crowning glory and condemnation of the little Judean city, thus made into the centre of history, a place of wonder and awe and everlasting interest to all the world, the end of so much that is all important to mankind, the beginning and point of departure to so much that is more important still. We may almost say with St. John that if all that has been written since of commentary upon that event were collected together, "the whole world," certainly all its known libraries and store-houses, would not be able to contain them. It has been the one subject of which the mind of Christendom has never tired. It has penetrated the deepest darkness, and inspired the simplest and the strongest souls. It is well for cultured persons at their ease to speak of the criticisms that have abolished Christianity, or the civilisations that have outgrown it, or the supposed Service of Man that has superseded it. These little systems have their day, rising perhaps into a little factitious enthusiasm from time to time during

the long centuries, dying away with every trifling generation that has given them birth: but nothing can ever obliterate the traces of that agony and passion, the great Sufferer upon the Cross, the shining figure of the Resurrection morning. What a mean and impoverished world would that be from which these recollections were driven! But such a condition is one which, happily, the mind cannot conceive, even the very assailants of these heavenly mysteries having their own minds and the atmosphere they breathe so permeated by them, that it is in the very strength of that breath of life that they sound their little trumpets against the influence which permits them to be.

But here no controversy can stand, no criticism find place. Many martyrs have died, but none have done more than approach the crucified feet of him who died on Calvary; many great images have stood forth to men, heroes and prophets and kings, the creations of an inspiration little less than divine: but no poet has ever imagined and no history has ever produced any being so great, so noble, so pure, as to reach the level of the supreme and awful, the tender and familiar image of Love Incarnate. They group themselves around, behind him, at his feet, though they may not have known him, enveloped in a great humbleness, saying every one, We are unprofitable servants; while on his lips alone we feel it no blasphemy, we acknowledge it as of right that they should say, "I lay down my life, that I may take it again." What are miracles, the little rays of light that penetrate through the chinks of the cloud? He is the great Miracle whom no theory has ever explained. When there can be found in all the extended worlds which have been discovered since that day, in all the planets and systems which were but lights to rule the night in the simple apprehensions of his contemporaries, another like

him—there may then be found a spot of ground on which to place the lever which will move the world: but not until then.

He would seem to have returned to Jerusalem for the Passover, which in its full meaning was to be the last, quietly and without observation before the time of the ordinary pilgrims. When those who were more devout "coming up to purify themselves" sometime before the feast, arrived in these sacred courts, they again asked each other in whispers and groups apart: "What think ye, that he will come up to the feast?" Nobody could doubt what would happen if he did so, unless he worked some supreme miracle such as all had hoped for, and called from heaven ten legions of angels, all glorious in heavenly armour, who, with the very dazzling sight of them, should drive the cohorts of Imperial Rome out of the rejoicing country, and make Jerusalem not only free but triumphant over all the countries and kindreds of the world. That was the alternative to all: to the trembling souls who believed on him, to those whose position was that of defying him to prove his claim: and to the very priests and Pharisees, among whom perhaps there would be some who, in their semi-patriotic terror lest the Romans should take away their name and nation, and in their more real alarm for their own power and system of internal government, would yet have endured personal downfall not unwillingly had they been able thereby to obtain such a miraculous manifestation of the Messiah. Great agitation, it is evident, there was everywhere, the Jewish rulers having ordered that if any one knew where he was they should give information that he might be taken.

It was under these circumstances that he appeared suddenly "six days before the Passover" at Bethany—where a feast was made for him. The place was no

doubt ringing still with the local glory of that miracle which is its distinction through all ages: and nothing can be more natural than that many should come to this entertainment not only to see Jesus, but Lazarus, the subject of that wonderful intervention. All the personages, indeed, of the great drama were there, along with the humble good man who says no word and makes no sign of personal identity, he who had lain four days in his grave in what wonderful suspense, or revelation of the mystery of death, there is not a word to tell us:

> "Where wert thou, brother, those four days?
> There lives no record of reply,
> Which showing what it was to die
> Had surely added praise to praise."

It was not the purpose of the Redeemer that such a revelation should be—enough that in all mysteries we know him who is the solution of them all. And from Lazarus there comes no word, nor any indication what manner of man he was: "Lazarus was one of those that sat at the table with him"—a man known to the whole village and all the neighbours who crowded about, pointing out to the Sabbath day visitors from Jerusalem, the man who had died and was alive. And there was Martha, the kindly soul, serving: enough for her to follow her natural uses, to bring the bread and wine, to see that all the needs of the guests were supplied.

Mary had another thought in her adoring soul, to do her Lord honour, to pay him such service of gratitude as her means permitted. Was he, perhaps, footsore with his long travelling, the lengthened walks by rough and stony roads, which such a pilgrim had to take? She came behind him as he lay upon the couch, and poured her costly ointment on his feet, refreshing and cooling. "And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." A sudden pouring forth of fragrance

FROM BETHANY, LOOKING TOWARDS JERICHO.

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is a recollection that outlasts many a more important matter: and John remembered this vividly and, perhaps, the start with which he himself, so near his Master's bosom, would look round to ascertain what caused it, and see the woman kneeling at those beloved, weary feet, wiping them lightly with her long locks, not to take the refreshing unguent from them, as a cloth would have done: noticing, too, in the momentary quick flash of observation, the alabaster box, a beautiful thing in itself above her means, in which it had been enclosed, and the astonishment of the poor Galileans to whom three hundred pence was no small expenditure. Their little chest or bag would contain no such sum, and the first thought probably of all was that this was a waste and extravagance, or at least an example of the costly ways of these well-to-do people who so honoured the Master.

Judas, only coming into special revelation now, who had been about with them all this time apparently unsuspected, managing their simple affairs, one of those who were sent on in advance to provide lodging and food in the villages, was the one to break out in indignation. Perhaps he knew that the little treasury was running low, and could not think how to get new supplies for it: perhaps the rage of a peculator who felt, had he but been given that alabaster box, that he might have made up his own deficiences and prevented the discovery which was imminent—was in his heart. In the latter case as he brooded over his troubles, and felt shame and exposure to be before him—which is the most likely explanation of the statement that he was a thief, his defalcations, no doubt, being found out afterwards —he may have missed those many intimations of an approaching end which the Redeemer had made as he walked and talked with the anxious band, who, eagerly as they listened, understood so little: or if he compre-

hended them by the light of his own trouble, the menace of an end about to come might have made the defaulter more and more conscious of the winding up and the exposure before him. Something of this desperation, so familiar to the most common modern fashions of evil, must have stung him at the sight of that three hundred pence which was thrown away, and driven him out in exasperation to make his fatal bargain with the high priests; thus covering his own crime with a universal explosion, out of which he may have hoped the Master would yet escape in some supernatural way.

Great agitation was in Jerusalem when it was known what was happening in Bethany. It would have been difficult to have seized Lazarus for no better reason than that he had been raised from the dead: yet, no doubt, his very existence was in itself so strong a protest against their opposition, so perfect an answer to their seeming-honest demand for proof of the high mission of his Deliverer, that he was to the priests and Pharisees almost as dangerous as his Master. And now there surged up again agitated consultations in the Temple how to destroy both, the disciple with the Lord. It must have been felt by all in the city that the approaching feast was a crisis, every indication of which pointed to serious national difficulty. That the claims of the Messias might awaken such a popular tumult that the Romans would take away both name and nation, was perhaps to some real alarm. The rulers might feel that the present régime in which they themselves were supreme was to be maintained at all hazards, even at the risk of that great much-prophesied triumph of their people, which had been for centuries the very reason of their existence: just as Herod believed in the coming of a sacred and heaven-appointed king, yet with an outburst of his native ferocity made sure, at all events, as

he hoped, that the expected prince should not come in his day. The circle of thought in which these anxious rulers moved, the obstinate determination of the Sanhedrim to maintain its own power at all costs, the extraordinary unintentional prophecy of the high priest, to his understanding a simple statement of fact, that it was better one man should die, even if he were without blame, than that the whole nation should perish: all these show the state of mind in the reigning class in Jerusalem. Some of them, no doubt, were willing that prophecy and promise should perish rather than that their own state should be disturbed. The priests, according to the description of St. Luke, were of the sect of the Sadducees, whose doctrines were essentially those of self-preservation; and the other sect of the Pharisees believed in the rigid law alone, and nothing else as the means of salvation—a law which Jesus of Nazareth had at certain points determinedly set aside. It is difficult to imagine how it could be that a race which had been held together by this very hope should now prove itself ready to sacrifice it entirely, in order to secure the continuance of its own existing circumstances—circumstances of bondage, national subjection and humiliation: yet so it was. The extraordinary shortsightedness of humanity, the prevailing terror of the unknown and inclination to maintain what is existing, thus acted to bring about the tragedy for which all the world was waiting—notwithstanding the force of expectation, of conviction, of proof almost universally accepted, which should have bound the rulers of this strange people to instant reception of the often-promised and much-looked-for Messiah.

No pilgrim, I think, will ever forget the sensation, especially if it is unexpected, which bursts upon him at the turning of the slope of that road from Bethany to

Jerusalem. Skirting quietly along the side of the hill without more thought probably than is always present in the mind of a traveller who enters at all into these sacred associations, we suddenly come round the corner of the winding path upon a sight which takes away the

SYRIAN CHILDREN WITH PALM BRANCHES.

breath—Jerusalem lying before us fully spread out in the sun with all her white domes and shining edifices, from the height of Zion to the steep slope of Moriah under the Temple wall, vaguely disappearing into dimness and a confusion of walls and roofs towards the

north, but fully distinguishable on the south side, with its walls following the inequalities of height and hollow, and the broad enclosure immediately facing the eye, where once the Temple stood, and where now stands the Dome of the Rock, isolated and beautiful, with minaret and dome clustering in varied groups around and behind. The pause of startled realisation, the long-drawn breath of an emotion too great for words, the wonderful sense of standing there in one's own humble person where he had certainly stood, and where the same all-affecting sight had met his divine eyes, combine to give to such a moment the intense consciousness as of a crisis in life —not diminished by the words of the respectful and serious guide, himself always grave, so that his demeanour takes nothing from the sensation, though what he says is to him an everyday expression of an undoubted fact. "This is sometimes called the Hosanna road." The Hosanna road! Here were the palm branches scattered, the garments laid down—long glistening leaves and humble cloaks, poor, yet blazing with the many colours of the East, with here and there a metallic thread of gold: and the children always lovely with their dark gleaming eyes, the little ones whom he loved, their pretty heads enveloped in kerchief and veil against the sun, their round limbs bare; and behind and around the pilgrim folk coming up to keep the feast, some from the Judean borders where he had lately been, some from Galilee, proud to think that he was of their kindred, all given over to that burst of emotion and enthusiasm, blessing him who came in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel! The Temple stands no longer on Moriah, the work of the ages has crumbled into dust upon those slopes, fire and flame and convulsion have ravaged that city, there may not be a stone there that ever felt his shadow or met his eye. But here he stood

whatever may be the changes that have come on all around. He saw the Temple with its splendid cloisters crowning the plateau of that hill where we see only the exquisite little Moslem dome in its blue and white. But, nevertheless, as we do now our Lord paused and looked at Jerusalem. He saw what John, no doubt, saw through the glories of his after-vision, the white, shining, blessed place, like a bride arrayed for her husband. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that stonest the prophets." O city doomed, yet deathless! The glory of the white town expands and grows blurred and broken in the sight of the late-coming pilgrim, child of the modern ages, through eyes full of irrestrainable tears.

The entry into Jerusalem would thus be made in the happy tumult of the arriving crowd, with much joyful commotion such as accompanied the arrival of the pilgrims, thankful to reach the end of their journey, welcomed by many friends, and adding to the general tide of festivity and national solemnity which they had come to share. Perhaps it was the shield of this rural company pouring in to pay its vows, which gave that immunity which is so strange considering all that had gone before, to our Lord in his first reappearance, after the hot discussions that had arisen about him, and the orders to take him wherever he might be found which had already been given to the police of the Temple. According to the Gospel of St. Mark he confined himself on that first afternoon to visiting once more and "looking round" upon the courts and holy places, retiring to Bethany in the evening; and it was on the next day that, having furnished himself with "a scourge of small cords," he drove out the money-changers from their booths, and overturned the stalls of the dove-sellers, which occupied the court of the Gentiles, making, no doubt, a lively market and exchange, a place of

gossip and levity in the very entrance to the Father's house. There is no need for sacrifices now, but the crowd of petty merchants in the court of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—and even, not to go so far, about the precincts of every great Catholic cathedral—keeps

ON THE HILL OF EVIL COUNSEL.

still a likeness before us of that prevailing impulse to make profit of the worshippers which probably never reached such a height as in the ample court of the Temple, buzzing with talk and barter, which the pilgrims had to traverse before they could reach the place of sacrifice and instruction and prayer. It is said that there were permanent booths established here belonging to the family of the high priest, from which they derived

great profit—thus, with a cynical absence of precaution, sanctioning an abuse for which there was no excuse to be made.

Evidently the feeling of all that was most serious in the multitude was entirely in sympathy with this bold and sudden movement of reformation, and no one dared to say a word for the traffickers as they were sent flying headlong through the crowd to carry their complaint, no doubt, to the authorities among whom neither does there seem to have been any who dared openly to defend them. Even the priests and scribes themselves, always looking for an occasion of offence, who, roused by the tumult, came crowding about the Reformer angry and questioning, had no open objection to make to what he had done. "By what authority doest thou these things?" they cried, coming hotly about him as he took his seat, the brief commotion over, in the usual place of the teacher, to instruct all who came to him. Perhaps there had been already a concerted action among the superior people to try their wits and their philosophy against the unlearned prophet before he was seized and silenced, which swelled the angry impulse by which they hurried to where he sat, to inquire by what right he took upon himself to do what they were aware they ought to have done—an action which in itself they did not dare to criticise. By what authority? It may be replied that almost everything he had said in Jerusalem had been an exposition of that authority. He had not spoken in those Temple courts as among the flowery ways of Galilee, but always, as it were, in the power of his office, with the highest claim, the most distinct announcement of the ground on which he stood and the mission with which he came. To ask him whose last words among them had been the marvellous statement: "I and my Father are one": blasphemy beyond conception and

beyond precedent, if not that it was true, what was his authority? was but going over a bygone question. And whether these might be new inquirers who had not heard that statement, whether they desired to elicit another declaration which they could use against him, it is equally evident that they neither ventured to object to what he had done, nor to fulfil the duty which would seem to have been almost demanded of them, and lay hold upon the man against whom the rulers had already issued their warrant. What instinctive terror or awe it was which caused their hesitation, whether it was concealed under the pretence of a design to collect further and further evidence against him, it is impossible to tell: but that after this incident as before it no hand was lifted to arrest him is one of the most wonderful of details. Our Lord himself referred to this when he said at the time of his betrayal—"I was daily with you in the Temple and ye took me not." He was entirely in their power, taking no precautions, exposing himself indeed both to individual and public retaliation in this public and vehement action: yet, it needed the aid of the midnight darkness, the traitor disciple, the lonely place, to put courage into the hearts of the Jewish authorities for this act.

When these first questioners had retired confounded by the opposing question with which he met their inquiry, and which they dared not answer, it would seem that others came forward, whether by a scheme concocted beforehand, or spontaneously, it is impossible to say. They meant to leave him no ground to stand on, these clever reasoners of the sects, each persuaded, in his turn, of his power to nonplus this unlearned Galilean. Was it, perhaps, a piece of money dropped upon the pavement by a terrified money-changer as he fled with his heavy boxes, which was picked up and

handed from one to another to show that effigy of Cæsar which furnished an infallible answer to the next cleverly constructed question? Should one pay tribute to Cæsar or not? the most subtle inquiry, calculated so certainly to embroil him with one side or another and bring him within the sway of the secular heathen tribunal, that secular arm to which exasperated Churchmen have always been so ready to appeal. We know what confusion awaited the askers of this question. Then came the gay and cultured scribes, with a problem at once scornful and profane. Whose wife should that woman be at the resurrection who had been married to one brother after another according to a painful provision of the Jewish law? The mystical refinements of religion with which we have to deal in the present day are in nothing more obstinate than in their absorption in this question of sex, which by some of them is forced on the unwilling listener with a pertinacity which does its best to make even religion indecent. The Master quenched this flaming firebrand with celestial calm and that authority which was "not as the scribes." He went farther even than the immediate matter, looking upon these sceptics, pretended teachers who soiled the spring from which they drew, with eyes more severe than his wont: and set forth that true doctrine of the resurrection, that everlasting germ of spiritual life, which the Jews had never expressed in their doctrine,[1] and which critics assert had never been revealed to them. What silence fell upon the breathless assembly when these few majestic words were said! "The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," well-known title of daily use, the

[1] It may, however, be remarked that the Jews had no doctrine properly so called—no declaration of "I believe": but only commands to be obeyed, the law—and prophecies to be hoped in; no creed expressed in any formula, but only great inferences and things implied.

very claim of the race to special privileges and their only standing ground in the world. "He is not the God of the dead but of the living." What words were these, silencing every vain speaker, filling with awe the great Temple raised to the honour of that name, penetrating to the farthest verge of the national history—and unanswerable, beyond the reach of argument, leaving every listener dumb.

Such a reply did more than silence the Sadducees; it gained the reluctant approval of the other party, who had never found in all its arsenals such a weapon to confound the adversary, and who now approached him behind their spokesman, still with their snare and trap which they had prepared, but with hearts one cannot but think a little touched, with a certain faltering in the voice of the man who put the question. "Which is the first commandment?" Nothing in all the systems of the world has approached the broad and magnificent basis of all religion which our Lord now laid down, the essence of that Judaism which is supposed to be the most narrow, formal, and harsh of all creeds, and of that Christianity which we are told our time has outgrown. When there has been anything else propounded fit to take the place of this everlasting foundation, then we may allow that our faith has been outgrown. It was no strange thing but familiar words which sounded in that holy place every day, words great and splendid enough to consecrate of themselves any temple,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. In this," it is added, "is all the law and the prophets:" in this, we may add, is heaven and earth at once, all the privileges and all the duties of man.

Is it, one wonders, sheer ignorance of this Divine statement of faith that makes the not ill-mentioned philosophy of our days imagine the Service of Man to be a new revelation, superseding the service of God?

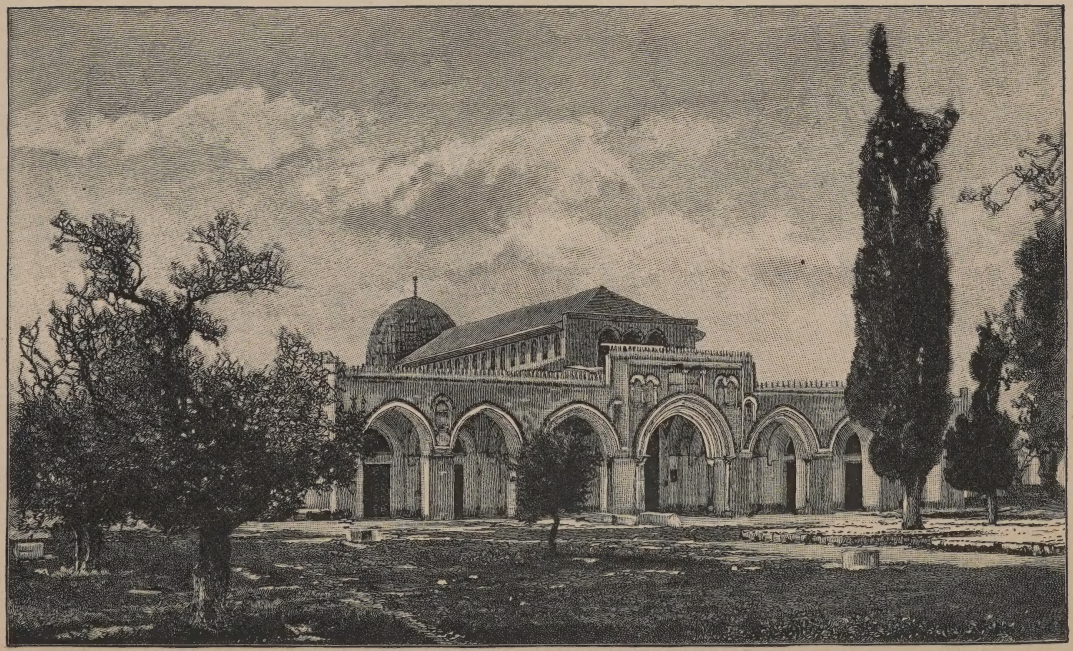
Even in those Temple courts, with all their factions, a better inspiration existed. "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth," cries the speaker who had put the question, caught in his own trap, if trap there was—a candid and honest man among those fierce disputers. But for this voice of surprised approval the bands of objectors, the critics and opposing doctors, seem to have been silenced, not knowing what to say. And then Jesus in his turn became the questioner. They were dumb when he asked why David should call the Christ his Lord when he was his son, as when he asked them by what authority John had baptized? They could not and dared not reply. Thus the first scene in which he appeared in the Temple in the days of his childhood was repeated at the end of his earthly career: "both hearing and asking questions"—leaving his adversaries confounded from their own mouths, silenced, unable to say a word in reply.

In these points, so briefly told, filling one chapter only in the record, the fundamental question as to who he was and what was his work,—which was that on which the Jews professed themselves most anxious:—is settled with a fulness which they did not ask, and in a sense which, perhaps—dazzled and confused as they were, by a revelation which was too much for them—their minds were incapable of taking in. A kingdom which was spiritual, which had nothing to do with Cæsar's kingdom, founded not upon conquest but upon a vast all-embracing love, the love of God, and of man: which held eternal allegiance, not to Hades and the memories of the dead, but to that supreme God who was

the God of the living; and which was the kingdom not of David only or David's son, but of the Lord and Master of David—such were the great final statements by which he explained himself, and placed the evidence of things not seen before their eyes. That they did not understand them we may well allow; that such knowledge was too wonderful to touch their rigid minds and the firmly fixed one-idea of the nation; that in this sense their eyes were holden that they could not see, and their ears that they could not hear. Yet they ought to have known and recognised what must have flashed upon a thousand simple minds like the sun in its shining, the higher meaning, the true sense of all their own economy. That last startling confusing gleam of light, pointing out that David's son was also David's Lord, ought to have cleared up to them the whole situation—seeing that the professed study and occupation of their lives had been in that very Law and Prophets which were threaded through from end to end with lights upon that subject, lights which should have burst forth to meet the revelation of his presence, showing the consistent line of indication and of promise. But it did not do so. That they were dazzled and confused in their intense discomfiture we may well believe, and that accompanying the eager and hostile curiosity which possessed them there was an underlying determination to hold their own place, not to be convinced of anything which should put them aside from that authoritative position, or risk the destruction of that superiority, which was their life and being. Once more we are reminded of the case of Herod, who did not, so far as is apparent, entertain the least doubt of the coming of the Child of Bethlehem, of what the Chaldeans told him, strengthened by what the scribes told him; and yet deliberately set himself to destroy the hope of Israel. So, though the Pharisees

were confounded in all their arguments, though the great constitution of the new spiritual world which their own had foreshadowed was placed before them, so that had they been faithful to their own inspiration they must have recognised it, they refused to do so. They must have turned away from that last question which cut the ground from under their feet, silenced, confounded, even paralysed; for not a finger was lifted against the bold speaker, he who had warned them that the kingdom was to be taken from them, and the stone which they had rejected to fall upon them and crush them to powder: and who now denounced them without disguise, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" as they stole away like a defeated army, leaving the eager multitude, and the disciples always circling him about: now triumphant, no doubt, though they too were little less dazzled and confused than the Pharisees, in their Master's victory over his enemies.

Nothing can exceed the strength and force of the denunciation that follows, poured forth in the very stronghold of their sway, and in the ears of many who no doubt would make haste to repeat to the ecclesiastical rulers of Judea, every word of that stern anathema. "Ye devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made ye make him tenfold more the child of hell than yourself. Ye fools and blind! Ye generation of vipers!" Never before nor after were those lips opened to utter the language of condemnation (not damnation even here, as in our translation, which was made when men did not mince matters and considered the eternal fire the most simple thing in the world —but judgment, and answer before a tribunal). He sat there in the midst of their very kingdom and poured forth divine indignation against the master vice, that



EL-AKSA : IN THE TEMPLE ENCLOSURE.

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hypocrisy and pretended holiness which brought virtue itself into disrepute: yet not one of all the officials of the Temple interposed. It was well known that sentence had gone forth against him in the Sanhedrim, that orders had been given to arrest him whenever he appeared. Yet there he sat and discoursed, and set forth the dreadful indictment against these men who had virtually the power of life and death in their hands. Awe seems to have seized upon both masters and servants—the one shrank away confounded, baffled at every turn; the others must have hung about helpless, not knowing to whom to turn for their last orders, afraid of the impassioned crowd that hung upon his lips—daunted most of all by his own aspect, calm even in his indignation,—and more than ever aware that never man spake like this man.

That he should have been allowed to depart peacefully out of Jerusalem, and take that grateful evening walk across the gentle hill and through the pleasant fields to Bethany, where no doubt the house of Martha was full of anxiety as to what had passed during his absence, is as wonderful as anything in the tale. It is needless to say that the varying accounts of this last week make little division between the days, so that it is almost impossible to separate them and decide upon which day certain events took place. Upon one of the evenings after these discourses in the Temple—probably, we may imagine on that day which has been above recorded, with still the fire of these last words dazzling in the air, and no man daring to interfere with his leisurely withdrawal, he seems again to have surveyed the great buildings of the house of God—perhaps in his divine courtesy at the suggestion of some new disciple who was eager to point out an addition or restoration executed since his last visit. That his immediate fol-

lowers did not remonstrate against this lingering is probably another indication of that excitement and confusion that was in the air, a bewilderment of all faculties, which prevented even those who loved him most from perceiving the risk of hanging about in the midst of danger. But he himself was not hurried, or anxious to escape. He must have paused and looked and noted what was pointed out to him, in the great sadness of what he knew to be his final effort. The day was over of possibility and hope—and now he could scarcely see those beautiful walls and domes standing strong under the level rays of the westering sun, for pity of the terrible scene when they should be beaten down, so that not one stone should stand on another. When he left Jerusalem, and sat down to rest upon the way, which rounds the slope of the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple, with his eyes upon the white and shining city, so peaceful outside, so full of every unchained demon of rage and blasphemy within, his countenance was still sorrowful with these thoughts. The disciples gathered round him eagerly yet full of awe, asking the explanation which he so often gave them. "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" That some dim perception of the approaching crisis of which they had been so often warned, and of his separation from them, they knew not how, had penetrated their minds is evident from this question, as it is also evident that they associated the destruction of Jerusalem with the end of the world.

There is an extraordinary pathos in the thought that our Lord himself in his renunciation of his divine greatness and acceptance of the lot of mankind, had consented to the limitations of the mortal state so far as to be himself unaware of any distinction between these two

tremendous events. On this great subject it is too daring to speak: yet the mingling of the two, the promise that "this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled," tempered with the statement which is very clear that "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, *neither the Son*, but my Father only" seems to contain such an indication; as afterwards in Gethsemane we have a like but yet more wonderful indication of this fact: when at the great crisis of his human agony it seems for a moment to have appeared possible to him that "this hour" (of which in another moment he said "But for this cause came I to this hour") might by possibility pass away. As he sat in his exhaustion after all the contentions of that day which had kept his human faculties at fullest strain—and looked over the valley at the doomed city shining all unconscious of its approaching fate: the thought of the coming of the heavenly kingdom in the hearts and spirits of men, and of the final settlement of all things, perhaps afforded to his soul, already overshadowed by the great cloud of mortal suffering, a welcome escape from the intolerable anguish of that siege and destruction which every sight of Jerusalem brought more clearly before his eyes. But to speculate upon a mystery so profound is not appropriate here. To imagine that our Lord in His intense humanity had accepted the veil of imperfect foresight, as he did those other limitations which compelled him to sleep for weariness, to be faint for food, even in some sort to pray for an impossible deliverance—is only to myself a more pathetic and overwhelming proof of the wonderful sacrifice which was not accomplished at Calvary alone, but by the sea-shore in Galilee, and the streets of Jerusalem, the sacrifice of living, far longer and more continuous than that of death.

Everything in the records of that day in the Temple

points it out as the last. What more was there to be said? He had left no stone unturned to convince, no further exposition possible to make his mission clear. Patiently he had heard and replied to every problem his enemies had set before him, so that none could be in any further doubt as to what he meant. He had cried once more in the Temple in the midst of all "I am come a light into the world. He that believeth on me, believeth not on me but on him that sent me." Neither among the Pharisees nor among the multitude could any delusion be left concerning him, or at least concerning the office he claimed. No longer a prophet out of Nazareth, no longer the Son of David alone, but the Lord of David, the Light of the world. It cannot be maintained for a moment that he had left Jerusalem in any doubt. He was the Son of God, the promised Deliverer—or else his blasphemy was proved before all men. One thing or the other; God or an impostor; there is no midway.

And then it would seem there was a pause: making their way softly along the side of the hill, stopping to rest, watching the sun go down and all the meltings of the evening light sink over Jerusalem, continuing as strength permitted their way among the gnarled olives and the waving corn, the little band would reach the village where the lamps were being lighted and the table spread for the evening meal. Some commentators imagine that on this evening was the great supper at which Mary anointed her Lord for his burial, and Judas, exasperated, set out to contrive, with his Master's enemies how to surprise him when apart from the crowd. But that does not seem to be justified by the narrative of St. John. And for a day or two after silence falls upon the wonderful scene. St. Matthew records some of the most impressive of the parables, that of the ten virgins, that of the final judgment, which may well have

been told to the village folk of Bethany, or the stragglers from Jerusalem who came out, as after a wonder, to hear what he would say: and to whom the description of those who said "Lord, Lord," but left all deeds of goodness unaccomplished, might well apply. But the courts of the Temple knew him no more.

It is strange to think what was going on there. "Many of the chief rulers believed on him," and these courts must again have echoed with questions—Where was he? Was he coming again? The Pharisees began again to encourage and stimulate each other to action, "Perceive ye not how ye prevail nothing; behold, the world is gone after him." They had not dared for fear of the multitude to lay a hand upon him during that great day: but now in his absence it was more possible to bestir themselves. How did they work in the meantime upon the spirit of the mob to change that so strangely? or was it the mere sight of him insulted and dishonoured that did this, calling forth one of those extraordinary revolutions of popular sentiment which so often occur in human experience? No doubt every scribe, every teacher who held by the priests and Pharisees, was busy for these two silent days in the endeavour to turn that popular tide. The chief argument with those who were capable of argument would probably be the danger to all their characteristic institutions, the risk that the Romans would take away their place and nation, the peril of the Temple which had been threatened with destruction. Jerusalem was their pride and glory, and this Nazarene had spoken of its ruin: their Sabbaths and feasts were their distinction among the nations, and he had broken one, and in the spirit of his teaching threatened to supersede the others. Could such things be? Would they allow themselves to be scattered among the common world of men, deprived of their

sacred character as the people of God, they, the children of Abraham? The rumour of such arguments might probably reach him in the quiet of the country in which he was, bringing ever nearer the inevitable catastrophe.

But that period of holy calm and intercourse, or else the immunity which he had enjoyed from all persecution in the recent days spent in the Temple, had so strengthened the disciples that none of the desperate devotion which made Thomas say, on an earlier occasion, "Let us go that we may die with him," is apparent in their demeanour now. The two who were, no doubt, the usual providers went into the city by his command to prepare for their Master, the night before the Passover, probably that all might be on the spot and ready to fulfil all righteousness on the next day—one of them, we must believe, being the guilty Judas with his terrible secret in his heart, attentive to note all arrangements, that he might betray the most favourable spot for his Master's arrest to those who had purchased his services. Our Lord directs them to the place as if it were one already selected by himself. Tradition, which, however, I fear is of little authority, fixes "the large upper room" as having been situated in the little group of buildings which surround what is called the tomb of David, and which lie on the southern side of Jerusalem, a little way outside the town. This may or may not have been; one point, however, in its favour, is that the little band would be able to go there descending from the hillside road straight down into the valley of Himmon, and by the heights and hollows outside the wall without attracting observation.[1]

[1] The pilgrim of the present day will find at the same period of the year the lower part of this building full of picturesque wild parties of Moslem visitors each in their corner, come up like the Jews of old "to keep the feast," and affording, no doubt, a very sufficient picture and reflection of the Jewish families in the course

Into the narrative of that holy feast it would be a presumption to enter. It can scarcely have been but with hearts heavy with apprehension, though they knew not what they feared, that the disciples followed their Lord, skirting the walls, within which Jerusalem was, full of sound and movement and the murmur of the multitude. There is no record of any instructive conversation, of those discourses which had beguiled the way on many a previous occasion, as they took this last long walk together. It would seem that the twelve alone accompanied their Master, the women and other disciples who generally followed him having perhaps joined their own families for the feast, perhaps remained anxious at Bethany, or gone up among the crowd to the Temple courts to hear what was being said, and if any steps were to be taken against him. We all know the story of that wonderful evening meal, which the Lord had so strongly desired to eat with his disciples before he suffered, and the sigh with which he said, having for the last time shared the supper, the common human meal, with all its associations of fellowship and mutual trustfulness with the chosen twelve, that "one of you shall betray me." Twelve at table, and, no doubt, a murmur of talk among themselves, it is not to be believed that Judas heard those words. It would be too great a wonder to believe that he could have heard them, and understood that his object was known, and yet gone out calmly, and been allowed by the rest to go out to accomplish it. John, leaning upon our Lord's breast, nearest to him at table, asked at the eager request of

of their annual pilgrimage. The Moslem feast is a very artificial one, a pilgrimage to the tomb of Moses, intending, it is believed, to serve the useful purpose of bringing a large number of Arabs into the holy city to counterbalance and hold in check at once the Christians and the Jews, but chiefly the former, who throng at Easter to the sacred place.

Peter who it was? and there seems to have arisen a pained inquiry among the rest, each one echoing his neighbour, scarcely understanding perhaps what the question meant, "Is it I?" Perhaps it was generally supposed among the party to be some commission to be executed, or at least something vague in the future like Peter's after burst of assurance, that in no circumstances could he deny his Lord; and the piece of bread which was given to the traitor would be but a sign of the Master's usual tender courtesy to the one among them who had to leave the table on his administrative business before the others. That they could have divined what he was to do quickly is impossible, else hasty Peter would certainly have stopped his goings for ever, before even the Lord could interfere.

There is a haze over them all as of the very dazzle and confusion of a great crisis uncomprehended, during the whole of that extraordinary scene. Its wonderful preface and accessories:—the washing of feet—strange and touching lesson in the midst of those contentions who should be greatest that seem to have continued up to this very climax—and the discourses that follow: are all full of this strained and troubled tension of human faculty, labouring at its utmost after the Divine, and breaking into an almost childishness of remark and question in its inability to catch the thread of meaning. While he speaks, more certainly now than ever before, "as never man spake"—they follow him like blind men at a distance, murmuring strange questions confusedly in the midst of his divine words: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" "What is this that he saith unto us, a little while? We cannot tell what he saith." These

all seem like the expressions of listeners, addressed as it were in an unknown tongue, straining every power to follow, feeling themselves swept into a great current which they can neither stem nor understand, and in the flood of which they catch at anything that may arrest the tide for a moment, or help them to standing ground. Nor is the utterance of their dazed satisfaction at the end less remarkable, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable. Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God." Strange words of weakness, utterly overpowered by the weight of a glory which was too much for them! There was nothing they had not heard before in the words which preceded this confession—and the confession is like the questions, almost inane in the pressure and strain of feeling.

But as they left the room where they had supped, where so much that was altogether strange and incomprehensible on any theory or wit of theirs had taken place—and went on with him again over the dark road outside the walls, Jerusalem on one hand flaring to the sky with all her lights and torches, her watchmen making their round upon the ramparts, the deep valley lying still below: and every man in the little throng crowding upon his neighbour to hear the continuation of those words that had been begun as they sat about the table—their troubled questions came to a close, and they listened in silence: perhaps they paused to rest when the valley of Kedron was reached, and there heard the last part of what he had to say to them, silent still in their strange rapture and wonder, and sense of something approaching which no one could divine. Was it there in the stillness of the silent valley, by the side of the little rivulet of water to which Kedron had fallen after

the rains were over, with the Paschal moon clouded in the sky, and everything hushed and sanctified in the coolness of the night, that they listened with heads bowed and hearts full of awe and wonder, to the ineffable majestic words of that prayer, wonderful communing of God with God, which the silenced atmosphere of earth

ANCIENT OLIVE-TREE IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

and the limited mortal horizon could scarce contain. "Father, I will"—words never spoken in earthly hearing before, and so strangely contrasting with those which were soon to be forced to his human lips by the extremity of an anguish such as no man had ever borne.

The Temple wall rises sheer from that grassy slope, the brook tinkles deep below, the old olive-trees wave

their silvery leaves in the shining of the moon. At that time the light would fall over the high cloister, and its arches, under which he had walked and talked surrounded by a wondering crowd, and the heaped up stages of the Temple buildings, tier upon tier. The pilgrim now feels often a thrill of pain at the common uses of that garden of Gethsemane, fenced and divided with its homely growth of fruits and flowers: but, perhaps, unduly—for then too it must have had its simple enclosure ensuring privacy, and a quiet place of rest under the olives to these wanderers and strangers. He left the band all overwhelmed with what they had heard, perhaps to seek for themselves resting places for the night, perhaps to continue their way to where they were sure of lodging and welcome at Bethany: and went himself with the three of his closest attendants who never left him, across the brook, to the favourite garden, which, no doubt, belonged to some disciple and was always open to him. They had probably often slept there on the dry grass beneath the trees, covered with a cloak, as is still so common in the East: and Peter and the two brethren prepared to lie down, weary with much emotion, and though not knowing what to-morrow might bring forth, thinking of nothing but quiet for the night. How it was that after the divine calm of that evening our Lord's humanity asserted itself in one last hour of weakness, who can venture to say? Flesh and blood were worn out, and he who had just spoken with the voice of God, was still only, in the pathos of mortal conditions, a man. He also had to pay the penalty of the flesh ("for this cause came I to this hour"), and bore it unsupported, as none of his martyrs have done. He withdrew a little from these troubled but exhausted friends, who could only sleep "for sorrow," limited human beings all confused and worn out: and fell for a moment into that

anguish unspeakable which sympathy could not share, nor love help; "Father, if it be possible: all things are possible unto Thee." He had bidden the disciples when he left them to pray that they should not enter into temptation: but he himself had all the brunt of the most terrible of temptations to bear. It was not enough that he should soar above the human as when he said, "Father, I will": the strain, the stress, the conflict, must be his as it was theirs of whom he was the representative. "Sore amazed and very heavy"—restless, going and coming to see, perhaps, if any cared, if there was one to stand by him: and there was none: not even of those who loved him most, not for one hour. "Simon, sleepest thou?" Peter was the strongest, the most eager to go with him through everything—and yet he could not watch one hour. There was never a picture so terrible, so wonderful, so natural—the going back again and again, the same words almost as if in the depths of his anguish the human weakness of repetition, was all that he was capable of: very man, bearing upon him the burden of the conditions of that race from which he would not liberate himself till the last.

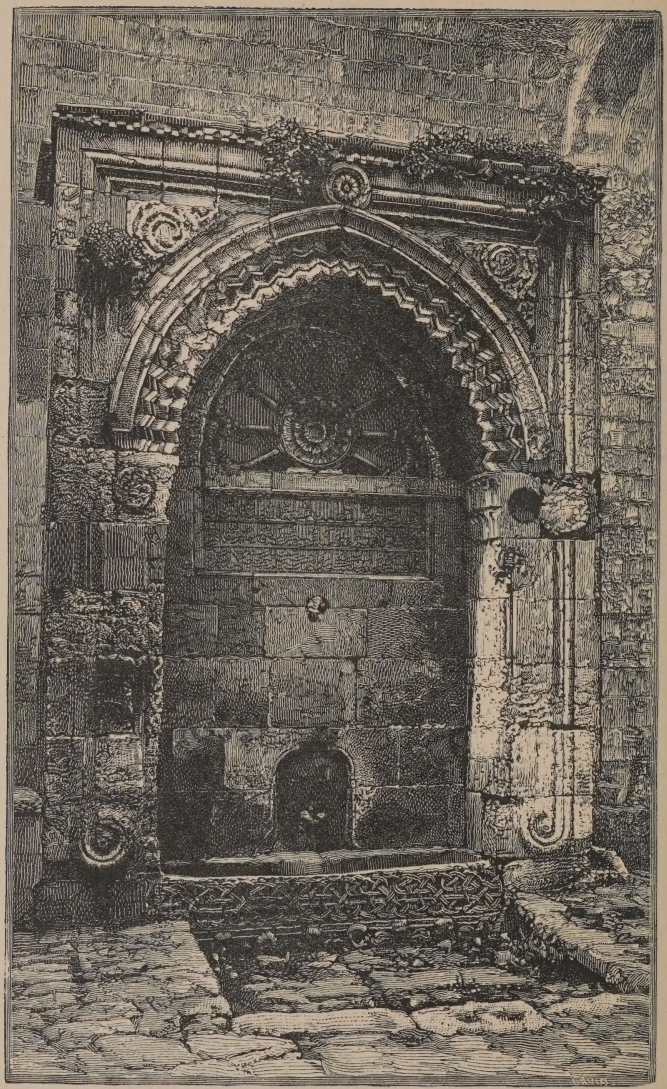
The coming of the darkling procession among the trees, in the depths of the valley: the sudden flare of a torch or two: the momentary tumult when Peter, dazed, starting from his sleep, snatched at the sword which in piteous uncomprehension he had brought with him from the chamber of the supper, and struck a hasty blow with it in the darkness and dazzle of confusing light: the one calm presence dominating all, stopping that clamour with a word, healing with a touch the wound which was so needless: the circle of the dark multitude round, confused in the moonlight: the Temple police half exultant, half afraid, surrounding their prisoner with their staves: we all know these incidents too well to

require that they should be recalled to us. The few terrified disciples, those three whom he had taken with him, and who do not seem to have been molested, followed in the distance, still with their dazed faculties unable to understand, as the procession made its way with as little sound no doubt as possible, perhaps by the sheep gate at the northern end of the Temple enclosure, the gate by which the sacrifices were taken in, to the house of the high priest. Nor do we venture to tell again the story of that awful night, when with those rude companions in the guardroom, perhaps suffered to lie down in a corner upon the pavement, perhaps standing patient, like the lamb to the slaughter, he waited the pleasure of his captors, and endured the questioning, first of the informal gathering of the priests and elders who were assembled to hear what had happened, and next — when the slow hours wore round, and the pale dawn stole upon the tumult of that chamber, dispersing the shadows of the sleepless night —the more formal examination before the Sanhedrim, hastily gathered in defiance of all law and justice to sentence him before he could be delivered from their hands. It would seem that even then in the midnight watch before any formal condemnation was pronounced, he was exposed to the rude jests and insults of the tipstaffs and officers, whose terror perhaps of what themselves had done, after the previous awe of his presence which had kept them back, found expression in a sort of desperate ferocity and mockery, a thing not unknown in the annals of superstitious panic. He had a harder burden still to bear, as he saw the furtive and terrified look of his beloved John appearing and disappearing at the open door, and Peter, ever bold yet not bold enough, penetrating, chill with misery, to the brazier, holding out shaking hands to the fire, shrinking back into him-

self when a suspicious doorkeeper pushed him aside with a hasty accusation "Thou also wert with him"—"I know not the man!"

How can we explain this defection, this astonishing failure of the heart? Even when he heard the cock crow, and conviction came upon Peter: when the Lord from the other side of the hall turned his head and looked at him,—was it with a smile at the speedy realisation of his own warning? with nothing but the reproach of love we may be sure:—the rough Galilean good for nothing but to die at his feet, we might suppose, not surely to revolutionise a world—did not break through the circle of staves and spears and fling himself on the ground before his Master, to share whatever might befall him, as many a lesser man has done:—but went out into that terrible dawn, in the chill opening of that awful day, weeping, struggling with himself, rather in the collapse of despair than with any burst of devotion. To turn his back upon it, to try to ignore it, to cry aloud to God, negligent and unheeding, for those ten legions of angels who could change everything in a moment, but whom the Master would not ask for: was this all there remained to do? Did the city sleep unthinking, when Peter burst forth into its streets, or was it waking early to the preparation for the Passover, and beginning to hear by flying rumours, always awake like care before the race of mankind—that Jesus of Nazareth had been seized, that he was before the judges, and that no one could tell what wonderful thing might happen that day?

The town was full of strangers and pilgrims, lying down to snatch their night's rest in every corner, in every khan and guest-chamber, and stirring early because of the discomfort and crowding of their accommodation as well as because of the solemnity of the day. And



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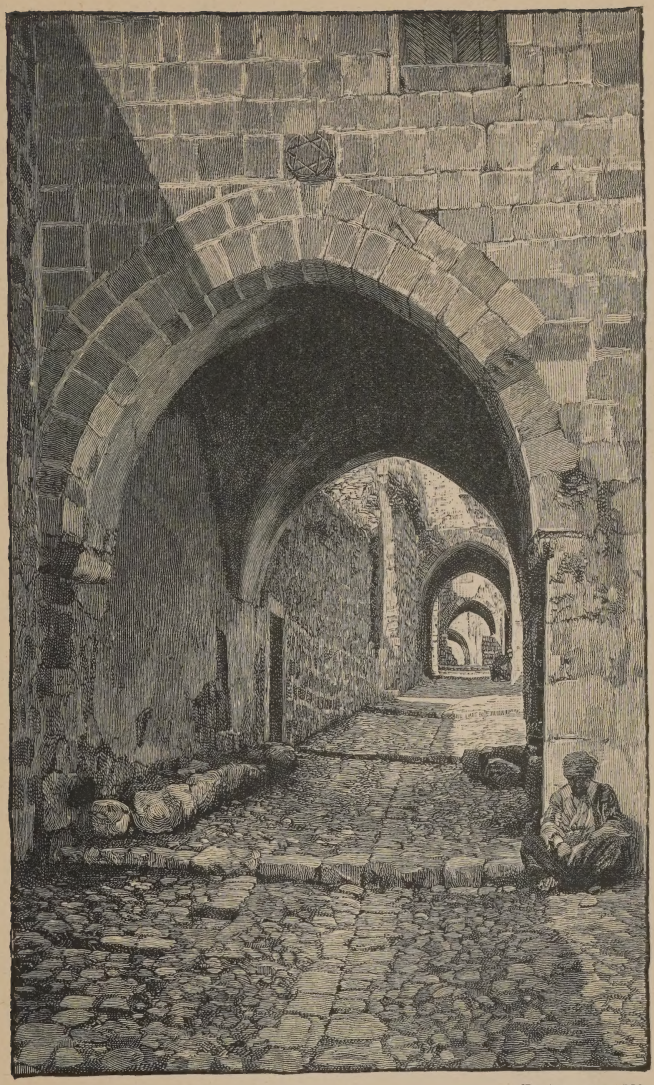
FOUNTAIN NEAR THE GATE OF THE CHAIN.

this new excitement thrown into it must have thrilled the restless city from end to end. The prisoner before the Sanhedrim, the charge of blasphemy, the eager search of the inquisitors for evidence: every incident would soon be known and followed with an excitement impossible to describe. Many in those streets into which the multitude would surge, eager for another and another scrap of news, would no doubt look for those ten legions of angels, for some tremendous sign to proclaim him and his office, so that no man should be able to gainsay: they would stand breathless in suspense, hoping or fearing every moment to see the heavens open and the Son of Man vindicated. In all likelihood the mob that rushed to Pilate's palace when it was known that the prisoner was taken there would represent but a small portion of the inhabitants of the thronged and astonished city. The roughs, the wretched fellows who are ever ripe for mischief, comrades and friends of Barabbas, offscourings of the population, would be those who pressed closest and shouted loudest in that ferocious throng. The better classes, people of a milder kind, the pious and the humble, those who knew the law and studied the prophets without being prejudiced Pharisees, and the vast crowd of strangers who were overawed by the legal rulers of their people and dared not interfere —must have been paralysed by the suddenness of the catastrophe, and perhaps could not believe in the possibility of such a lawless and instant conclusion. I do not venture to follow the Lord as he stood before judge after judge, calm, neither resenting nor replying to the insults addressed to him, explaining nothing. All his explanations had been made before, and the high priests knew it well; they had but to produce any of the thousands who had listened to him in the Temple to prove their charge of blasphemy. Undoubtedly every word he said was blasphemy—unless it was true.

But Jerusalem all surging about that terrible scene is more within the range of the modern writer. I have little doubt that the many-coloured crowd which throngs every street at the present day—when the little population of the city is swamped in the multitude of pilgrims, Christians to keep the Easter feast, Jews to keep the Passover, jealous Moslems to keep the peace, and make their own fictitious celebration at the grave of Moses—resembles much more, perhaps, than any other modern crowd resembles one of two thousand years ago, the influx into Jerusalem at that great and memorable Passover. Going along the line of street which is known now as the Via Dolorosa, on the Good Friday of 1890, it was impossible not to feel that just so must the surging masses have closed upon that fatal procession, the soldiers clearing the way, the wondering spectators gazing over each others' shoulders, pressing upon the sufferer, as he made his way up the toilsome steep, his bodily frame worn with the night's vigil, the exhaustion of the garden and all the farewell scenes neutralised by no hour of rest, no moment of quiet: while every new street and lane poured forth its spectators to gaze at him, and the hoarse shouts of the multitude rang in his ears, and the jibes of the mocking Romans and their scornful laughter at the Jew criminal and his Jew persecutors alike, rose through the tumult. Not that tears were wanting even then. "A great company of people and of women which also bewailed and lamented him." Not all were joined in that hoarse shout of "Crucify him!" The mocking and the laughter and the cruel cries were broken by that wail of which alone he took any notice. And so the dreadful procession toiled by. Steep and rough as those streets are now, they must have been still more steep with their pavement of great stones, and rough steps and frequent breaks nineteen hundred years



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THE VIA DOLOROSA.

ago. In the heat of the midday, amid the pressure of the crowd, carrying that heavy weight under which a weary frame exhausted by sleepless nights and laborious days wavered and fell: with all that tumult sweeping round and the anguish at the end which was more than martyrdom: our Lord made his final passage through those streets of Jerusalem, in which he had done no violence neither had deceit been found in his mouth: in which he had put forth his hand so often to heal and to comfort and to bless.

It is no easy task in the dark splendour of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: in those dim places—now high in a lofty chapel, now low down in a mysterious crypt —to realise the mount that was called Golgotha, the new grave which was in the garden close by, in which Joseph of Arimathea laid the body of the Lord. And there are many doubts and questions among the learned whether this spot, though hallowed by the faith of centuries, is really the place of the crucifixion and entombment. There is a little mound to the north outside the Damascus gate upon which one of the late explorers, Major Conder, has fixed the attention of many, and which, no doubt, affords an aid to the imagination in realising that dread and wonderful scene which no combination of stately building can afford. It is the place where Stephen was stoned, where Jewish executions, when the Jews had the power of life and death, certainly took place; and it is evidently to the sight of all, a place of a skull, the hillock being marked with cavities and lines which recall in an extraordinary manner that formation. There the cross might have stood out against the sky, against the sweep of undulating country and low hills towards the north, so that all the world might see: there the crowds might have streamed, covering every slope, standing "afar off" yet seeing every particular of the

terrible tragedy, the pierced side, the offered sponge: there the great darkness that quenched both sun and day would come over a vast horizon as if the whole world was filled by it: and there would be room for all the passers-by to pause and gaze, and for priests and fierce Pharisees to stand around and utter that wonderful confession, more profound than Peter's, more all-expressive in its enmity than the warmest utterance of enthusiasm or faith, the very warrant and seal of earth put to the act of salvation: "He saved others; himself he cannot save": unconscious testimony never to be gainsaid! the witness through all the ages, of hate to love.

And low in the side of the hill is a tomb,[1] cut in the rock like all the tombs of Judea: not now a new grave —centuries old, dark with age and the filling up of the soil, yet still distinct, with its shelf, its couch of stone, place made for the last relics of mortality yet never finished, one rocky bed and one alone, having been occupied:—"in a garden" wild with uncultivated herbage, yet not altogether without trace of its ancient use. Was this Joseph's tomb, the place where the watch was set, to which the women came in the morning, where the angels sat, and the sun of the resurrection shone? This will probably never be certainly known until we meet in another state the witnesses of that event, and trace with them every hallowed spot, if such an indulgence of human feeling may be dreamed of. But the thought that it may have been so is one to make the heart swell, and the tears rise, as the pilgrim stands alone in the silence outside the city, disturbed by no clamour of contending creeds, with only heaven over him, no scent

[1] The description and model of this tomb, so extraordinarily carrying out all that the tomb of our Lord must have been, and realising with wonderful minuteness the narrative of St. John, has been published from special explorations by the Rev. Haskett Smith in a recent publication.

of incense or glare of lights, but the fragrance of growing grass, and the sight of the sun. There is no room for human memories in that spot where the greatest of earthly events took place: yet the strained human soul moved to its depths may be permitted to turn aside with a pang of gladness, to think that this grave was discovered in the bowels of the earth with all its solemn possibilities, by General Gordon, a tender reward and grace from heaven, almost a sign of intimate sacred friendship and favour, to that true servant, and brother and follower of the Lord.

We will not attempt to dwell upon a conclusion so sacred. Almost we think that the final scene of that wonderful life, in the simplicity and awe of its natural records should hold a place a little apart, to be read not every day but with special preparation, at special times: as indeed the instinct of Christian reverence has tacitly ruled it should be. The history of earth holds no other record that approaches it. It has been discoursed upon by thousands of voices, few of them competent to the subject, yet never lost its overwhelming interest, its awe and wonder. Far be it from me to attempt to retrace that amazing and unparalleled passage in the great story of the universe. After nineteen hundred years, during which the eyes of the race, whether in reverence or in blasphemy, have been fixed upon it, no one has fathomed its full significance or learned all its mysteries. "Which things the angels desire to look into." There will be time to understand it, to know something of the breath of its meaning, the divineness of the sacrifice, the full consecration of its human part, of death captive and life triumphant, in those ages when we, too, shall have passed through the portals of the common grave.

When that great act was accomplished, the story of Jerusalem, the chosen city, came to an end. Through all the vicissitudes of mortal life it had survived, with tenacity and obstinate persistence when cities much greater mouldered into dust. Besieged, conquered, burned, emptied of its population, trodden into dust, it had risen again time after time, its walls and its shrines ever renewed, its unchangeable traditions carried on. Internal dissensions had raged in it, its sanctuary had been desecrated again and again, its little kingdom torn to pieces, its free-born children carried into captivity. Through tragedy within and conquest without, and fire and convulsion it had still continued, renewing its youth like the eagle. But now its hour had come, and the use for which it had been preserved was accomplished. The brief and awful Passion of the city followed the Passion of him whom she had rejected in about thirty-two years. And if the fiercest stand of resistance that, perhaps, ever was made, the most desperate and tragic valour, could in any way atone for the cruelty and falsehood of previous history, then the Jews in that last act of their national history might be partially forgiven—were it not that treachery and cruelty still accompanied them in the heroism of that terrible struggle. Finally the fears of the high priests were realised; the Romans took away both their place and people; and for some centuries it appeared that at last the race, the sacred places, the memories and traditions of the city of David, and the Mount of Zion, had been stamped out for ever. So had thought the Assyrians five hundred years before; but their captives had become again a nation, and long outlived the race that carried them off in chains and weeping. The destruction made by the Romans was still more complete. Again one stone was not left upon another in that sacred enclosure so jealously guarded and

defended; again its people, so many as remained, were driven like chaff before the wind: but all that had happened before, and only marked an era in the history. Now, however, the blow was final, the annals of the city were closed, and all its emblems and its types fulfilled. Everything in the strange and impressive silence which now fell over it, marked the accomplishment of this unalterable sentence. An awe of something more terrible than ruin enveloped the plateau upon the little hill, so that even Rome herself withdrew trembling from any attempt to disturb its ashes. The old order had changed, giving place to new. History and hope all accomplished, all misunderstood, ceased in the spot which had been preserved by their means. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killedst the prophets, and stonedst them which were sent unto thee! If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!" But that which had never been, and so seldom is, in the perverse history of man, was now for ever impossible. "Ye would not." And the long era was accomplished and all ended for which Jerusalem had been called into being—which she had conceived as for her own advantage solely, and which at last by her own fierce and bloody hands, unwitting what they did, had been carried out, to the accomplishment of her own doom and terrible fate.

That this wonderful city should have risen from her ashes again in the name of him whom she crucified, that Christian blood should have been shed in floods as Hebrew blood had been shed before, for her deliverance; that every fathom of her soil and every stone should be hallowed by the name which she scorned and rejected—

yet that the city should remain in the possession of the wild Ishmaelite, the enthusiast of the desert, are all facts so strange and so unparalleled that we can but feel the mystery of the future which is involved in them to be dimly shadowing underneath, as the mysteries of the past are all involved in the wonderful tale. When the traveller comes round the slope of Olivet and sees suddenly before his eyes lying white in the sunshine the holy city over which our Lord wept:—the sacred hill covered with shrines in which his name is not named save in the potent inference of that denial, inscribed around the Dome of the Mahommedan, which in its very assertion that there is no Son of God suggests to all ignorant yet intelligent souls that he must exist who is thus so defiantly and solemnly denied:—with the closed and built-up gate below through which those who thus deny him believe that he is one day to ride triumphant into the ancient home of his name: the mystery and wonder and hope of that future comes upon the gazing pilgrim in a silent rapture of indescribable emotion. For a thousand years and more the hearts of Hebrew poets and prophets so swelled and rose at thought of him who was to come, the Son of David, the King of Israel, the Prince of Peace—an event which they understood as little as we understand any Second Coming. And my heart, I own, acknowledges a fond superstition before the closed arches of that Golden Gate. The old, old trees of Gethsemane lie beyond in the valley, the little brook he crossed so often still gathers a little rivulet from the rains. Shall he one day come again and enter from the valley of his deep humiliation to the lofty courts of his Father's house? Who can tell? It is the superstition of those who have written upon their most sacred shrine that there is no Son of God, it is not ours:—yet the heart fills and the eyes run over to think—If

that might be! The prophet upon this very hill may have stood and gazed and pondered what manner of man that should be whom he himself had described so minutely, he who was to come as a lamb to the slaughter, the rejected and despised of men.

THE END.

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